

Your Guide to Cult Movies, Arthouse Oddities, Drive-In Swill, and Underground Obscurities!

SHOCK

CINEMA

NUMBER 15

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Featuring an exclusive
interview with
FRED
"The Hammer"
WILLIAMSON

Plus MAD MAX's Toecutter
HUGH
KEAYS-BYRNE

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Welcome to another issue of SHOCK CINEMA, chock full of cult cinema at its most obscure and extreme. This edition is crammed to the margins with dozens of reviews from our brain-damaged array of writers, as well as two terrific celebrity interviews. Of course, the main item is a lengthy Q&A with action-superstar Fred Williamson, as "The Hammer" recalls the highlights of his four-decade-long career. Sure, he's been covered in a few other mags, but there was no way I'd ever turn down an opportunity to have this beloved grindhouse icon grace our cover. His bad-ass career has been a mainstay in not only SHOCK CINEMA, but my ancient '80s-newsletter SLIMETIME, in which I reviewed most of his Deuce classics, including BLACK CAESAR, HELL UP IN HARLEM, HAMMER, THREE TOUGH GUYS, THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY, and many more. No question, I'm proud as hell to have Williamson onboard for this issue...If that weren't enough, there's an insightful, Australia-based interview with actor Hugh Keays-Byrne. Best known for his villainous turn as the Toecutter in MAD MAX, his eclectic career has included the biker flick STONE, THE BLOOD OF HEROES, THE DRAGON FLIES, and the recent mini-series JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH...As for this issue's film reviews, I've again dredged up several outrageous oddities, which only helps answer a question I continually get: "Are you ever going to run out of movies to review?" Happily, at this time, the answer is no, because even though there's a lack of genuinely interesting new efforts (despite filmmakers' attempts to convince us otherwise), hundreds of amazing movies have fallen through the cracks over the years, and fanatics (like myself) are always hard at work, hoping to unearth copies.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES / BACK ISSUES: Single issues are \$5 apiece and a 4-issue subscription is \$18 (with all checks made out directly to myself, Steve Puchalski). Also, when sending in a subscription, please let me know which issue you'd like to begin with. As usual, subscribers can keep track of when to renew by checking the upper right corner of their mailing envelope's label...For overseas readers, single issues are \$8 apiece. In addition, if you're hot for back issues, I've still got several of them available. #6 & 7 are \$4 apiece, while the slicker #'s 8 through 14 are \$5 each. All issues are sent via First Class Mail.

Before I move onto any personal ramblings, it's time to reiterate the most basic rules about dealing with SHOCK CINEMA (as well as myself).

1) Video distributors and independent filmmakers continually send me unsolicited tapes, blindly expecting me to review it. Well, unless you ask me beforehand, you're probably shit out of luck (unless your movie defies the odds, and actually has merit). In the case of older, cult titles, I have so many videos in my private collection (I lost count after the 2000 mark), that I already own many of these movies and have often reviewed them in past issues. Please, unless you're one of my regular sources (you know who you are), ask before you waste time, tapes and postage.

2) Over the last 10 months, I've had dozens of new "independent" video distributors sending me their bootleg catalogs, requesting a free mention. Simply put, there's no way I can include all of them in the mag, or else the

Video Distributors section would be two pages long. Mind you, I love to plug new companies (particularly if they're got exclusive titles), but if you just show up, out of the blue, offering the same Jess Franco shit that everyone else peddles, I can't help you out. I only plug companies that I know and respect, from past and present dealings. Even more important, if anyone thinks they've been burnt by any of these advertisers, drop me a line, and I'll get on their ass (hey, I'm a collector too, so I know how it felt to be ripped off by someone — but let's not discuss Donald Farmer right now).

3) Concerning my mailbag, I don't mind answering a few questions (such as where to locate specific movies), but please have the simple courtesy to include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. From now on, all non-SASE requests will go directly into the circular-file (unless I'm feeling mighty generous). Hard to believe, despite this classy-lookin' mag, I'm no Rupert Murdoch (in fact, my lifestyle is more akin to Rupert Pupkin)... As for e-mail questions, I try to answer them all, even if it takes a few weeks (hard to believe, during my busiest periods, I'd rather spend a free hour with my wife, rather than answer anonymous e-mails).

4) Finally, in a reminder aimed at potential advertisers: Although I continually tell businesses to reserve their space far in advance (because I limit the number of ad-related pages, and currently have a waiting list of patient folks who want a spot), I still have people sending me an ad, only days before the final deadline, assuming there's *always* space available. Not true. So please *contact me* first, before cutting a check.

Hopefully, this edition of SC is finding its way into the hands of new readers, as we continually increase our circulation and provide subversive material for chain outlets such as Tower, Borders, and Barnes & Noble. Unfortunately, some of the largest magazine distributors still haven't come around to the idea of picking up the mag, even though a number of their stores want to stock it. Their reasons? We don't have a half-naked, barely-sentient scream queen on the cover. We don't give a shit about big-budget Hollywood slop. We don't focus exclusively on obsessive fanboy-genres. And as one distributor put it, SHOCK CINEMA even dares to have too much text (!), which doesn't appeal to comic book fans...Personally, I think most of these excuses are due to lazy, corporate bullshit; so if you've got a favorite bookstore/comic shop/magazine stand, and they don't stock SHOCK CINEMA, get their magazine distributor's name and send it my way! With your help, I'll do my damndest to get it onto their shelves.

Sorry if this editorial sounded a bit snippy, but it's been a long rancid summer, and if not for blessed air-conditioning, I would've hauled out my old Underwood typewriter and gone the Jack Torrance/"All work and no play" route. Happily, once this issue is out of the way (and after Halloween weekend's Chiller Theatre Expo, where you can find us at our usual table), Anna and I are taking a much-deserved vacation down to New Orleans. Our first trip there in five years, we'll have a chance to kick back, suck down a few Hurricanes, rip into a heaping plate of crawfish, and take a break from this cathode-ray craziness. I can't fucking wait. But for now, sit back, take a deep breath, dive deep into this issue, and enjoy. 10/6/99

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Cover photo: Fred Williamson in **BLACK CAESAR**.

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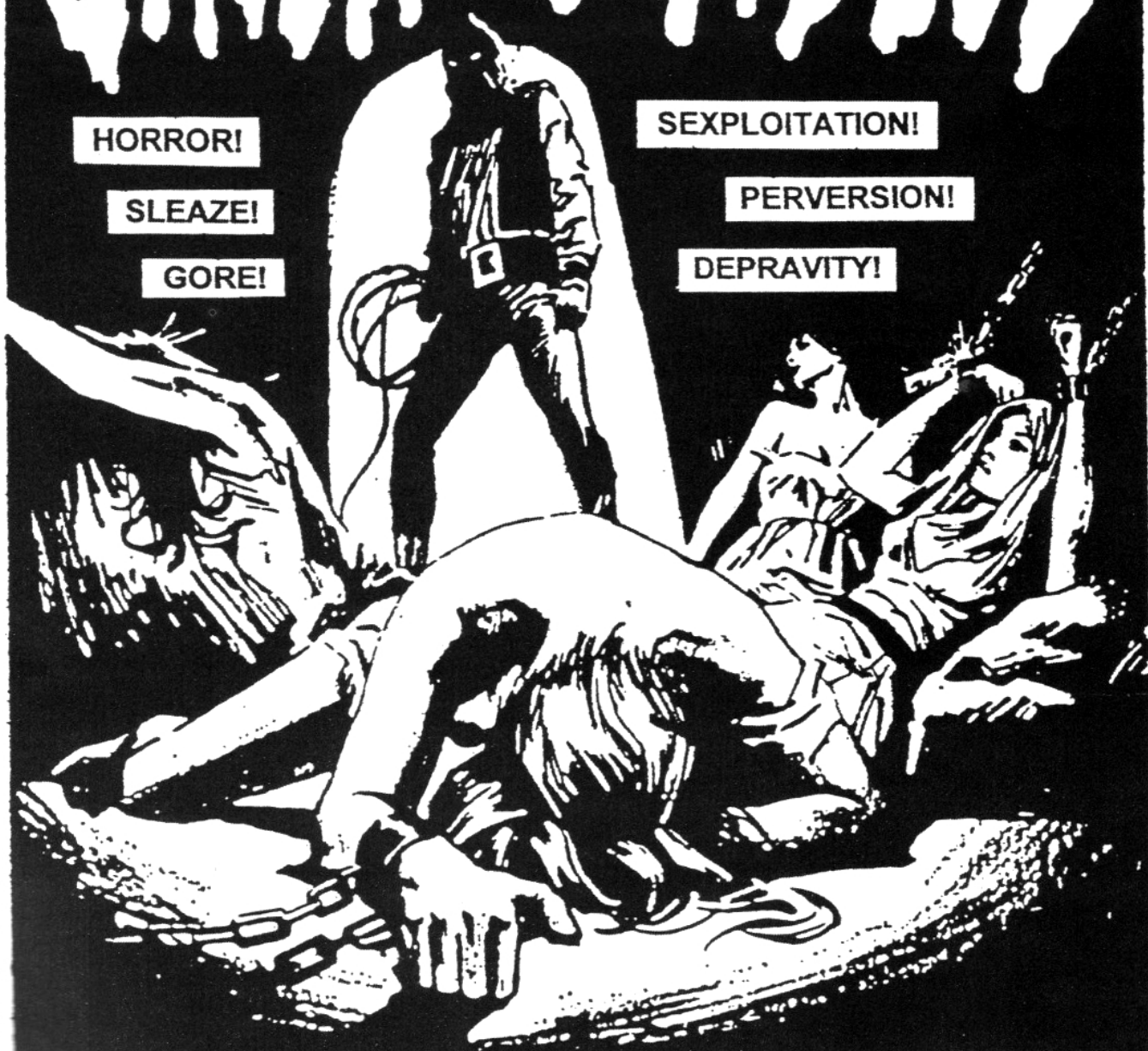
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THE LAST ACTION HERO: SHOCK CINEMA TALKS WITH FRED WILLIAMSON

Interview by Steve Ryfle

As Harlem gangster Tommy Gibbs, runaway slave Nigger Charley, or any of the badass movie heroes he played, the ex-football star known as "The Hammer" ruled the grindhouse cinemas on 42nd Street in the early 1970's. That era and its grimy theaters have long since passed, but Fred Williamson has never moped about it. While other ex-action icons faded into obscurity, Williamson became the hardest working ass-kicker in the business, battling an international assortment of bad guys in dozens of low-budget actioners.

Born March 5, 1938 in Gary, Indiana, Williamson was raised in crime-ridden neighborhoods on Chicago's south side. He then won a track scholarship to Northwestern University, later switching to football. An All-American receiver, Fred earned a degree in architectural engineering; then he was drafted by the 49ers, who turned him into a defensive back. That's when Williamson earned his nickname — The Hammer — for a karate-like defensive technique he employed, knocking down pass receivers as they came off the scrimmage line. Williamson played football for 10 years, and went to Super Bowl I in 1967 with the Kansas City Chiefs. By that time, he was known equally for his verbal bombast as his defensive play (and the tailored uniforms and flamboyant white shoes he wore on the field), and before the game he bragged to reporters how he would pummel Green Bay's offense. But late in the game, Williamson was knocked out while making a tackle and was carried off the field on a stretcher. Green Bay won, 35-10.

Williamson retired from football in 1968 and worked briefly as an architect, but after seeing the TV drama *JULIA* starring Diahann Carroll, he went to L.A. and used his *cojones* to get a meeting with the show's producer, Hal Kanter. Williamson became Steve Bruce, Julia's he-man boyfriend, and soon he jumped from TV to films as Spearchucker, the football ringer on Hawkeye's team in *M*A*S*H* (1970). Though he lacked experience, Fred's ballsy confidence led to a steady stream of acting gigs.

The Hammer's film career can be divided into two parts. The first coincides with the Black action boom of the early 1970's, when Williamson headlined pictures for major studios, as well as low-budget mavericks like Al Adamson and Sam Arkoff. In 1973, Williamson founded Po' Boy Productions, and when Blaxploitation went bust after 1975, the second part of his movie career began. The Hammer did double- and triple-duty as actor, producer, director and screenwriter in dozens of shoot-'em-ups (usually starring himself as an anti-hero cop, bounty hunter, private eye, soldier, etc.); the pictures were short on stars (substituting B-icons like Robert Forster and Bo Svenson) and production values, but always featured lots of ass-whopping, macho posturing, naked breasts and other guilty pleasures. In the 1980's, Williamson

made numerous movies in Italy and was a certified action star in Europe, and in 1996 he produced the Blaxploitation reunion *ORIGINAL GANGSTAS*. The Hammer also rents his baaaaad self out for projects like William Lustig's *VIGILANTE* and Quentin Tarantino's *FROM DUSK TIL DAWN*.

Williamson makes little distinction between himself and his onscreen persona, constantly referring to his film characters in the first person. He is still full of bravado, but he's also got a self-effacing side. Physically, he's still in great shape, with bulging arms, a tight frame and his shirt still unbuttoned at the top, revealing chest hair. Yeah, he could kick the shit out of you if he wanted, but underneath it all, you sense he's a nice guy.



Fred Williamson looking tough and dapper in *HELL UP IN HARLEM*

Though his punches and kicks might not have the same snap today that they did in his youth, the Hammer can still dish out vigilante justice like a pro. Williamson's passion for his craft is still strong, evidenced by his latest projects (a film called *THE OPPONENT* with Richard Roundtree and Jim Brown, and a TV pilot called *BLUE MIAMI*, starring the Hammer as a bounty hunter).

SC: What was it like working for Robert Altman on *M*A*S*H*?

FW: Robert Altman is probably the most free director that I have ever been around. Robert Altman let you do whatever you wanted, and his favorite thing

was to have everybody talk at the same time, which was the most exciting. You know what that did? It forced you to see the movie more than once. If you loved it, you had to go back and see it five times, to hear what each individual is saying, because everybody talked at the same time. I thought that was genius. I had just stopped playing football when I did the movie *M*A*S*H*, and I played the football player, which is ironic, but it was the perfect thing for me. Then, I decided that this is an easy occupation to do. I said to myself, nobody's ever made a black gangster movie, or a black cowboy movie.

SC: You're referring to *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY*. Why hasn't that film ever been released on video?

FW: Paramount won't put it out. It made was their highest grossing film the year we did it, but they were embarrassed by it. It was Frank Yablans [president of Paramount during the 1970's]. He was totally embarrassed by the fact that he'd go to a Beverly Hills party and they'd ask, "hey Frank, what's your biggest grossing picture of the year?" and he goes, "THE LEGEND OF (mumbles) CHARLEY." He was upset. The movie only cost \$600,000 and it made \$12 million. But it's a word that people still flinch when they hear. The brothers say it all the time, it's like saying "popcorn." When they released the film and it was advertised it in the paper, they had to call it *THE LEGEND OF BLACK CHARLEY*, or *THE LEGEND OF CHARLEY*. There were only a couple of newspapers that would print the title *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY*, so we had to change the name in those ads. But in Times Square, we rented the biggest billboard we could find, and we killed 'em! A few weeks before the film opened, we put up a big sign that just said, "He's Coming!" Then, two weeks after that, it said, "He's Here!" And then, two weeks after that, there was a picture of me standing there with my arms folded, no shirt on, and it said *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY*. So we created an interest.

SC: If the studio was so embarrassed by the title, how come they kept the "N word" for the sequel *THE SOUL OF NIGGER CHARLEY*?

FW: Because they like money. The second one didn't do so good. But *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY* was a damn good film. The stuff we did in the South with the runaway slaves, then we jumped on horses and went West — that was great stuff. There was some beautiful scenery, the horse chases, and the characters were well developed.

SC: Where was *NIGGER CHARLEY* shot?

FW: We shot the western stuff in Arizona, and we shot the plantation stuff in South Carolina at a big mansion where slaves used to live. There's a whole bunch of those homes still down there. At that time,

the relationship between me and D'Urville Martin was really just getting started. You remember him — in *BLACK CAESAR*, he was my main man until he got religion; then he became a foe, because he wouldn't help me anymore. When I got shot outside of Tiffany's, I went to him for help and he puts me in a chair. He puts his hand on my head and says, "Heavenly father, heal my friend. Forgive his sin." Whoa, that ain't what I need, man! I need some bandages! So, I left. That was all ad-libbed stuff, man. Then I went to AIP and told them about doing a black gangster movie, and they hired Larry Cohen, and he wrote the script *BLACK CAESAR*. I patterned it after Edward G. Robinson — the bob hat, the suit and tie — the guy who robbed from the rich and gave back to the poor. It was my idea, and this had never been done before.

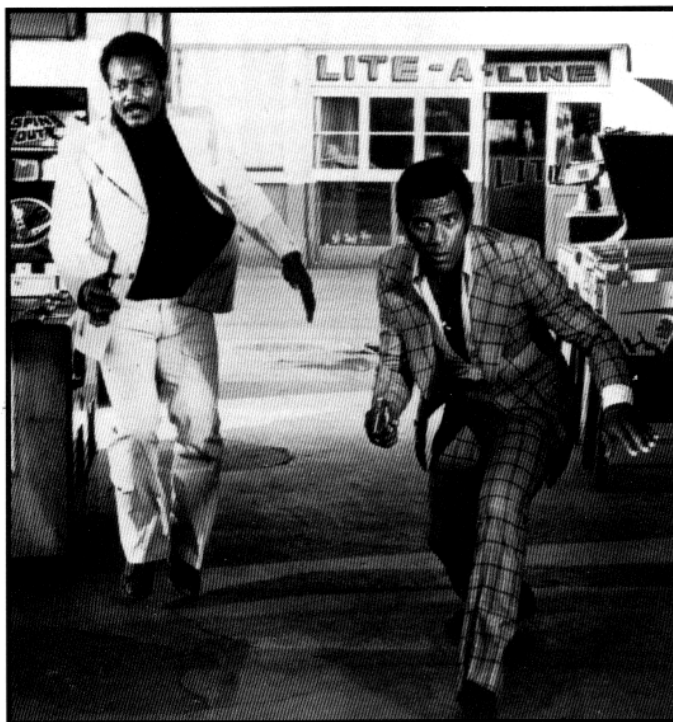
SC: At that point, I believe the only feature Larry Cohen had directed was *BONE* with Yaphet Kotto, a wonderfully strange film. Had you seen it?

FW: No, I didn't know Larry Cohen. I've since seen a lot of his movies — *IT'S ALIVE*, *THE STUFF*, I've seen those. He's a weird person, forget weird director. He's become an eccentric, old, obnoxious man right now. I hired him for *ORIGINAL GANGSTAS*, and he turned out to be not a very formidable working guy like he was during the days of *BLACK CAESAR* and *HELL UP IN HARLEM*. He took full advantage of the fact that he was a writer, and he started re-writing the script that I had already paid some guy \$50,000 to write. Then, by the time we finally got him to stop, he had taken the story so far off track that he demanded new money to re-write and bring it back to where I originally wanted the story to go in the first place. So, my recent experiences with Larry Cohen will never be repeated. But back in the day, he was the man. He was the most creative, he was a listener. He listened to what you had to say, and if you had good things to do, and good things to say, he incorporated it into the movie. Now he's an eccentric man who wants to do it his way — his way is the only way that's right. If I had known that he'd been fired off three pictures, and that he walked off of two pictures before I hired him for this movie, I never would have hired him.

SC: It seems Cohen brought something out of you in *CAESAR* that other directors didn't.

FW: He didn't bring it out of me. I knew what I wanted to do in that film. You're talking about something that was close to home to me. A lot of those ideas about how you buy this big house for your mother, then you move your mother in, and your mother thinks you stole everything. Every time you come up with something new and big, the first thing your mother says is, "where did you steal that at?" You say, "Come on, mom, I've got a good job, I'm making money. I didn't steal this, I bought it." But you can't convince your mom because if the lifestyle change is too dramatic, they won't believe you. And in *BLACK CAESAR*, I buy my mother the house where she had worked as the housekeeper, and she wouldn't take it. She said, "Tommy, I can't live in this neighborhood." I said, "Mom, we've got enough money so you can live anywhere you want." But she couldn't make that transition. That came from me,

that came from my life experience. Larry Cohen couldn't tell me how to relate to the black people and the black public. He had no idea. He left it up to my interpretation and to my lifestyle. All the life that I had lived, I flowed into this character. Larry Cohen damn sure couldn't tell me. What the hell does he know about the relationships in black communities, about how black people really act and interact with each other?



With Jim Brown in *THREE THE HARD WAY*

SC: There's the scene where Tommy is walking down 125th Street in Harlem with his boys, decked out in suits...

FW: Right, I'm tossing money, I've got the hot dog. [Cohen] couldn't tell me how they were going to react, but I knew how they would react. We didn't shoot that scene with sound, because I didn't do it as Tommy Gibbs walking down the street, I was the Hammer walking down the street. And the people on the street were not actors, they were real people reacting to the Hammer. We put the sound in later, you know, "hey Tommy, go get 'em, Tommy!" But it was really the Hammer that the people were checking out. So, I knew what the reaction would be when I walked down the ghetto streets. Any place in America, I know what the reaction will be. It ain't Tommy Gibbs they see, it's the Hammer they see first. And then they start telling me about the movies they like, and the things they like to see me doing. It's like I've got my own niche as an individual in American society.

SC: Tommy Gibbs is a ruthless gangster, but he has a complicated relationship with his father, which makes Tommy more sympathetic.

FW: It's like everything else. You give somebody a lot of rope, and pretty soon you're sorry you gave it to them. Because then you've got to start looking over your shoulder. The only person who can hurt you in your camp is the one closest to you, because your enemies don't know nothing about you. The only person that can hurt you is your sidekick, the one who knows all the shit you're doing, all about your books, and all about the little money you're

keeping for yourself and not reporting to Uncle Sam. They know all of that shit. So that's who can hurt you. And that's the situation Tommy put his father in, and that's when he decided to take over Tommy's business. Once I get shot in *BLACK CAESAR*, they pick me up in *HELL UP IN HARLEM*. They think I'm going to die, so while I'm laying in bed recuperating, he uses his knowledge of my routine to try and take over my business.

SC: Was it Sam Arkoff's idea to do a sequel?

FW: Sam Arkoff likes money. The reason they didn't let Tommy die was that it made so much money the first time. At the first screenings, before the film was released, the audience reaction was so tremendous that they [AIP] said, "we don't think we should kill him. Let's just let him get beat up in the yard there, and not let him die." That's why they start the second one [*HELL UP IN HARLEM*] by picking me up in the alley. The reactions were so strong from the audience that they said, "no, no we don't want to do that."

SC: Tell me about *THREE THE HARD WAY*. That seems to be a forgotten classic from the Blaxploitation era.

FW: That was a badass movie, because you had three guys who stood for something individual, in their lives. So you've got three guys who are credible people before making the movie, then all they got to do is live up to that credibility in the movie. As long as you don't see them dancing, singing, or doing something totally opposite of their image, then it's going to work.

SC: You wore some cool checkered threads in that movie.

FW: That was in! It was happening, you know. That was the 1970's, it came in and it went out quick. I watched that movie once at a theater on 42nd Street, and the audience was laughing at those clothes, so Hammer had to lose those checks!

SC: Your character, Jagger Daniels, lives in the Marina Towers on the Chicago River. There's a great sequence where he kisses one beautiful woman goodbye, then walks down to the marina, where another chick is waiting for him in his boat, and they go cruising on Lake Michigan.

FW: It was the lifestyle, the image. People think I'm that way anyway, man, so I was just living up to my image.

SC: You've maintained a public persona, but Jim Brown and Jim Kelly, who are also icons from 1970's black movies, have been more private.

FW: I haven't seen Jim Kelly. I tried to find Jim Kelly for *ORIGINAL GANGSTAS*, because I was trying to get everybody from back in the day, but I couldn't find Jim Kelly. I really don't know what happened to Kelly. I did three pictures with him: *THREE THE HARD WAY*, *TAKE A HARD RIDE*, and *ONE DOWN, TWO TO GO*.

SC: Jim Brown seems to be so intense, like if you said the wrong thing, he'd tear you apart. Does he have a low tolerance for bullshit?

FW: That's a fairly good observation [laughs]. He doesn't give you a second chance, whereas I'll give

you a second chance. As an actor, Jim Brown is fun for me to work with, because he's a buddy. I don't know how he is with other people. He comes prepared, he comes ready to work, he knows his lines, he's very definite with his ideas about the interpretation of his characters. That's all you can ask of somebody.

SC: Jim Brown's film career is interesting. In the late '60's and early '70's, he was working in mainstream studio films. Then, the black action boom comes along he does that kind of thing, but once it's over his workload tapers off. It's almost like Blaxploitation killed his career, rather than boosting it.

FW: I wouldn't say that. I think, when Hollywood first started using Jim, they weren't building a mainstream actor like they do now with Denzel Washington or Wesley Snipes. They were utilizing Jim's celebrity status to bring the blacks to the movies so they could make more money. They weren't interested in furthering Jim's career, they were interested in making more money at the box office. They never had to pay Jim in those days what they paid the white actors. So, the kind of money that they gave him was a small investment. Today, Denzel makes millions, Wesley makes millions. But when Jim was doing it, even though he was getting paid pretty good money, it was the white actors that were making the big bucks. So, it was no great increase in their budget to have Jim in the film, and it was good for the box office to have Jim in the film.

SC: So he was a star, of sorts.

FW: He was a star without a future as a star. So, when the opportunity came along [in the form of Blaxploitation] for him to jump on the other side of the mainstream, now he could make a little more money and also control his own destiny, and star in the films rather than just be the sidekick. So, he became the star of SLAUGHTER and all those other movies. Unfortunately, the black trend didn't last a long time.

SC: Back in the 70's you guys were in great shape, even though you hadn't played football in a while.

FW: We still are! It's ego. Ego and vanity.

SC: THAT MAN BOLT was supposed to be the first in a trilogy about the Bolt character. What happened?

FW: I was far ahead of my time. This was, like, 1972. They weren't ready for a black James Bond. I shot this in L.A., Hong Kong and Las Vegas. It was a great film! Universal made it and then got scared, they didn't know what to do with it. They said, "Fred, we don't know what to do with you. We think we'll just pay you off, because we don't really know what to follow up with." So, they copped out, out of fear, they copped out. And the big black film movement hadn't really started yet. This was 1972, and the black industry was just getting going.

SC: While you were working in all these different movies, you took a job on MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL.

FW: My deal with ABC was that I would get three movies of the week if I agreed to do Monday Night Football. But I never got to make them. We only did one season, and I never a chance to do the movies. After I took Howard Cosell's toupee off, and did a Mariachi dance around it, they just paid me off. "Thank you, Hammer, but Howard doesn't like you." The problem was, I was just as controversial as Howard. I was just as outspoken as I am now, I said what was on my mind, just like Howard did. But they forgot to tell Howard that I was controversial like that, and Howard got intimidated by me and my knowledge of pro football, which was greater than his. I became a challenge to him, and the only way he could defeat this challenge was not to talk to me on the air. I would say something to Howard, and he would talk to Frank [Gifford] and just ignore me. So [ABC Sports president] Rooney Arledge said, "Hammer's not working out." So that's when I decided to do my Howard Cosell toupee dance. Took it off the top of his head, right there on camera. What could he do to me?

SC: There are several theories as to why the Blaxploitation boom went bust. What is your perspective on that?

FW: It's real simple. They weren't making enough money. They were making money — they were always successful, none of them lost money — but the most they were making was between \$8 million and \$10 million grosses. In Hollywood, their light bill is \$8 million. Warner Bros., M-G-M, they tried it, but they couldn't survive off \$8 million or \$10 million grosses. At that time, \$50 million was happening. Now, for some films, it's \$200 million to break even, but in those days, if they made \$50 million or \$60 million, that's what they wanted. So, it was beyond them to keep making these movies, because they weren't making enough money. So, they went back to their mega-white stars, and spent a lot of money on advertising to make people want to see the movie, hoping to get \$50 million grosses. Also, at that time there were movies that were bombing. That's why they jumped on our bandwagon [the Blaxploitation boom] in the first place—TORA! TORA! TORA! was a flop; Barbara Streisand's movie, the singing thing she did at 20th Century-Fox [HELLO, DOLLY], that bombed; DR. DOLITTLE. So they said, "We got to find some way to cut our width

down, so let's jump on this black thing and we can make them for \$1 million, \$2 million, and we can make enough to keep the lights on while we decide what to do next." And that's what they did, because TORA! TORA! TORA! and all those movies killed them, almost broke 20th Century-Fox. They all had these bombs, and then comes along a movie like SHAFT, with a budget of something like \$1.5 million, and it makes \$10 million for M-G-M. And that \$10 million helps pay some goddamned bills until they get another big movie and enough white stars together to make a bigger movie. It was truly a business thing. But, while they [Hollywood] were dying, I was learning the business of "the business," so when the phone stopped ringing, I already knew how to make my own fuckin' movie, and I didn't need them anymore. So, if you want a Fred Williamson movie after '75, you've got to come directly to Fred Williamson, he's making his own.

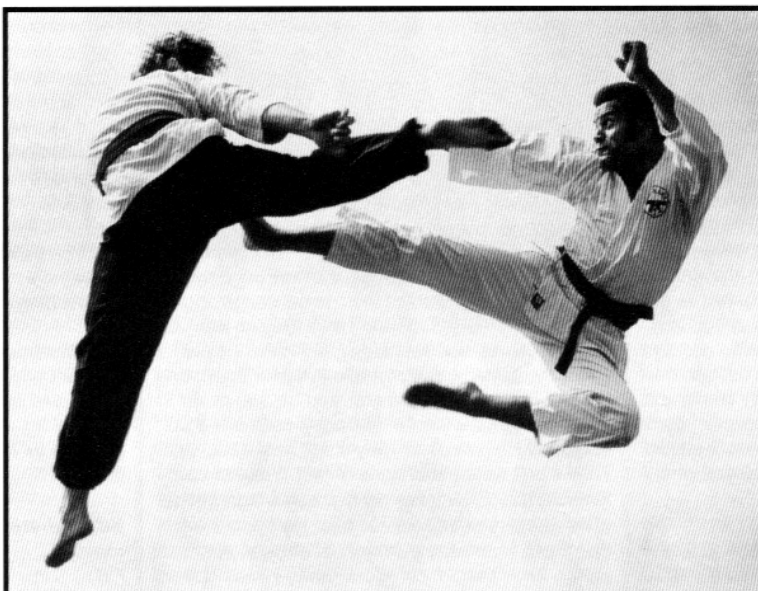
SC: You once said, "I don't make educational films, I make entertainment films."

FW: Exactly, because people want to be entertained. If you want to see a documentary movie, that's fine. But if you want to live vicariously through what I do, which is to kick your boss's ass because you don't like him, or to be able to say, "you dumb sonovabitch, I don't like you." On 42nd Street at noon, the theater was full of guys with suits and ties, with their briefcases. And they were going to see these ass-kicking movies because we took no shit, and that's how they kicked their bosses asses, by living vicariously through us. One of my favorite Clint Eastwood lines was, "OK, here's my badge, here's my gun, you go do it your way, I'm gonna do it my way." Every man wants to do that. It's an urban fantasy.

SC: When you founded Po' Boy Productions, what were your goals?

FW: From the start, when I came into the industry, my plan was to learn the business of the business. I had already been used as a football player — everyone had made more money off me than I did. Something was wrong with that picture; if I'm the talent, and it's my ass on the line, and you're making money and you're giving me nothing, something's wrong with that picture. So, I vowed never to put myself in this usury situation again. So, when I

came into the movie business, when I did M*A*S*H, I'd sit there and ask 10,000 questions. I watched the camera movements, I watched the lights. I learned about cameras, I learned about lights, I absorbed the business like a sponge. I absorbed the mechanics of making a film like a sponge. I rented an Arriflex and I took it apart. Couldn't get it all back together [laughs]. I gave it back to them, rented another one, and finally, after the third try, I took every little piece, every little screw out, and on the third try, I was able to put it all back together and make it work. So, I knew all about Arriflexes, I knew all about Panavision cameras, I knew about lenses, lights, everything. So, by the time I made my first picture, NO WAY BACK, which was made for \$75,000, I knew I was going to make money. Because I knew how to make a film, I knew how to set



The Hammer leaps into action in THAT MAN BOLT

the lights, I knew where to put the camera to make it look interesting. A lot of other filmmakers who don't have a lot of money — they shoot wide, but I knew that if you don't have money, you shoot it tight. You get into the character's face and sell the character. So, I avoided the mistakes that a lot of filmmakers make who are just starting out. Because I knew that if you don't have money for explosives and special effects, then you better have a good story so you can get people entrenched into the story and the characters, because we could never match the effects that the majors were doing because we didn't have the money. So that was the secret of the movies that I did at first — I made character movies.

SC: I read somewhere that you're like the low-budget Kurosawa, shooting with four cameras running simultaneously.

FW: Exactly. I do that because you can cut in motion, and match every movement of an actor. You'll never see any mis-matched shots and fuck-ups in my movie, in terms of matching a guy's position or where he was when he was saying something — like when you do an over-the-shoulder the guy's holding a drink, and you cut back and he's holding a cigarette. That don't happen in my movies, because I cut in motion. And my actors are moving, you never see two actors talking against a flat wall. That's a telltale sign of a cheap-ass movie, or an inadequate director of photography or cameraman.

SC: When you watch other people's movies, what do you look for?

FW: I watch to see if the big boys are really spending all the money they say they are spending. Because I just don't see it, man. The difference between a \$5 million picture and a \$100 million picture, there ain't no difference except the people in the movie. Because the cost of the camera rental is the same, the cost of the film is the same. The cost of the picture, below the line, is the same, unless you've got a lot of freeloaders. You can tell who the guys from the craft service are, they're all over 300 pounds. You can tell who the Teamsters are.

SC: What's your idea of a movie hero? You've mentioned Mitchum, Lee Marvin. You're talking about anti-heroes.

FW: It's a guy who stands for something, for what he believes, and isn't carried along by the trends, by popular belief. You have your own belief — if it fits in with popular belief, fine, but if it doesn't, then you've got to live it that way. Because when the smoke clears and the fight's over, the only thing you've got left is the guy in the mirror looking back at you, saying, "Did you do what you really wanted to do? Did you kiss his ass or did you kick his ass? Which one did you do?" So, that's why I look the way I do at age 60. I got no ulcers, I got no wrinkles, because I don't take that shit home and say, "God damn, I should have told him what I really thought." I tell you what I think.

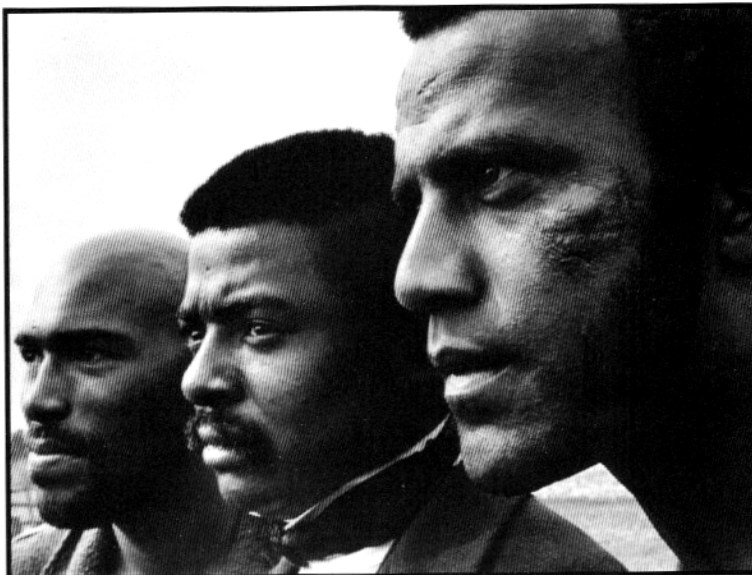
SC: In several of your films, like *BLACK COBRA 2*, there are these long foot chases, as if you're showing off your physical stamina! And in *NO WAY BACK*, you chase the bad guy over the

roofs of cars in a traffic jam.

FW: Each one of those cars cost me \$50. They were junkers that I had re-painted, and each one had to be carried there on a flatbed, because they weren't driveable. Each car was meticulously put in place, and we put people inside of them, then I ran on top of the cars.

SC: So, were there ramps for you to run up the back of the trunk?

FW: Nah. You say four or five hail Mary's, make sure the cars aren't wet so you won't slip and break your butt, and then you go.



With D'Urville Martin (middle) and Don Pedro Colley in *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY*

SC: Did you invent the character of Jesse Crowder [the bounty hunter in *NO WAY BACK*, *DEATH JOURNEY*, et cetera] or was it from a book or some other source?

FW: Jesse Crowder was a character I created because I wanted to do Eastwood-type stuff. I had just gotten some Eastwood scripts, and so I was doing *DIRTY HARRY* type stuff with Jesse Crowder. I did three or four of those.

SC: Where did the term "Blaxploitation" come from, and who assigned the negative connotation to it?

FW: It started with this bullshit about image. How can it be a negative image if it's real? All we were doing is showing what actually exists in the society. And it was done long before we started doing it. Again, I go back to the old movies. Where were you when they were glorifying the bad guy? Cagney used to kill 100 people, Raft used to kill 200 people, and you would feel sorry for them when they got caught. You never wanted them to get caught, right? Remember *HIGH SIERRA*, when Bogey went up into the Sierras and was hiding out? And they were shooting at him, waiting for him to come down, and the fucking dog ran up there, and he stands up to save his dog? We went, "No Bogey, don't stand up!" And bam! He gets shot. They didn't write about that. They didn't write about none of that. So, it all came from the press jumping on this bandwagon about what we were doing. Rather than glorifying the fact that these films were putting a lot of black actors to work, and the Uncle Tom image was being destroyed, all the waiters and the porters and yessuh bosses were being killed off. And what you

had left standing was Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, Richard Roundtree, Pam Grier, Billy Dee Williams. Stand up kind of people doing those movies at that particular time.

SC: Is "Blaxploitation" a bad word?

FW: No, but it's a word that people like me, people like Jim Brown, we don't understand it. You would think that it was coined by a white reviewer, but it really was the black press that was doing it. The white critics picked up on it, but it first came from the black newspapers, the *Amsterdam News*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Washington D.C. papers*,

they were writing about image stuff. And we were saying, "the image is that we are working, and we ain't 'yessuh, bossing' it anymore." How can you call my films black exploitation? I'm kicking whitey's ass, and in some movies I'm kicking black people's ass. I'm an equal opportunity ass-kicker. I kick yellow, white, blue, pink. Everybody's ass gets kicked in my movies, so what does this black exploitation mean? I have no idea. It don't mean nothing to me. Who's being exploited? Certainly not me, because I like the paycheck that I'm getting, and all the actors who work for me like the paycheck they're getting, and the audience is being pleased, so I didn't understand who's being exploited. It was a connotation created out of ignorance.

SC: You made many films with D'Urville Martin. How did you guys get together?

FW: *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER*

CHARLEY was the first film we did together. After that, then *THE SOUL OF NIGGER CHARLEY*, we just kept the relationship going, and we did *BLACK CAESAR*. And then, when I started making my own movies, I'd always call D'Urville to see if he wanted to be in each movie.

SC: *BLIND RAGE (1978)* is a personal favorite of mine.

FW: [Laughs] That was one of D'Urville's projects. D'Urville brought those guys, I think they were out of Manila. He had worked in a film in the Philippines with them, and so he returned the favor...The main thing about D'Urville is that he was my best friend, a friend I knew socially. He had this flair for comedy, and people seemed to laugh at everything that he did. So I thought it might be a great idea that he and I get together. And since all the films that I made were action-oriented, D'Urville and I could work together and D'Urville would provide the comedy in my films, and that would take the kiss of death off the violence and the action.

SC: What made him funny?

FW: D'Urville looked funny. D'Urville was short, round, and he had this smile from ear to ear. When you looked at D'Urville, you automatically smiled, because he had that sort of comic magnetism about him.

SC: Is there a particular film of his that you like most?

FW: I think D'Urville and I came into being, as a workable twosome, in *THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY*, where I played a runaway slave and

D'Urville was tagging along with me all the time, trying to tell me what to do or what not to do. I was the headstrong kind of buck, that wanted to go his own way, so we had a conflict, a comic conflict throughout the whole film.

SC: He also produced a couple of films, and he directed DOLEMITE (1975). Did he have a lot of business savvy?

FW: D'Urville knew everybody. There didn't seem to be anybody in the business that D'Urville didn't know, and if he didn't know them, he'd pick up the phone and call them and act as if he knew them. That was really his greatest asset: D'Urville had no fear of picking up the phone and calling anybody — the president of any studio. He'd call and say, "this is D'Urville," and somehow they would take the phone and become his friends. If D'Urville wanted to know someone, it would take him five seconds. He had *cojones*.

SC: How did he die?

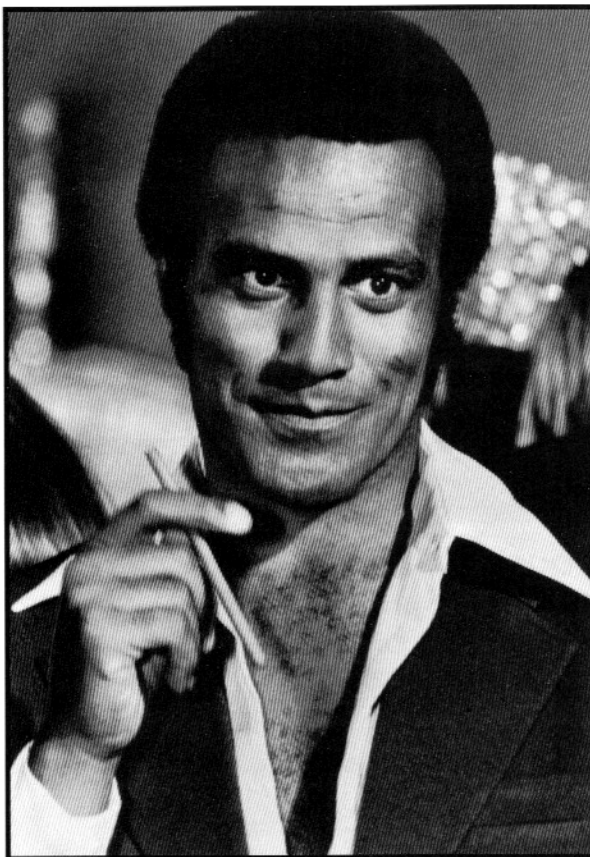
FW: D'Urville had a heart attack. He was a person who enjoyed life to the fullest extent. He was up all day, and I don't think he ever slept more than two hours a day. He was up and out, partying all the time. He had a massive heart attack while getting out of his car, going to a party, about 9 o'clock at night. His lifestyle contributed to his death. He grew up in New York and died in Los Angeles. D'Urville talked all the time, but everything he said was funny, so you never really took D'Urville serious... It's too bad he's not around today, for a lot of reasons. I would like to work with him again. I have not been able to replace D'Urville in my films.

SC: After M*A*S*H, you were in TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME, JUNIE MOON (1970), working for another great director, Otto Preminger.

FW: JUNIE MOON was a film I got through my association with Ingo Preminger, who was producing M*A*S*H. He had heard that his brother, Otto, was looking for an Italian type guy to play the character of Beach Boy in this film. Ingo was impressed with my performance in M*A*S*H, so he took me and introduced me to his brother at a dinner party. Otto was having a dinner party at his house, and we arrived, totally unannounced. So, Otto agreed to read me in a small room while the party was in process. He did his intimidation act on me, which I thought was a little funny. I wasn't doing very well in the reading, and finally I just took the script and threw it down. And Otto said, "OK, you go now. You leave." And as we walked to the door, he said, "you football players are out of shape. You probably can't do what I want you to do in this film anyway, which is to pick up a guy in a wheelchair and carry him around all the time." And when he said that, I grabbed him and lifted him up, and he started kicking and screaming, "put me down," and money was falling out of his pockets. The people who were there for the party, they thought I was going to kill him. So, I put him down, kissed his wife's hand good-bye, and left. And by the time I got home, I had about five phone calls from Otto Preminger saying, "Come back, I want you for the part."

SC: What was Preminger like to work with during the shoot?

FW: Well, he intimidates people. He likes to pick on people. He had this shiny bald head, and he'd wear this little monocle in his eye. He was as much a character off the screen as he was on the screen. He said a few things to Liza Minnelli, like, "you were so bad today. What happened? You were so good in rehearsal." He made her cry a couple times! He tried to pull that stuff on me a couple of times. I was driving a dune buggy on the beach, and he kept chastising me for hitting the mark. It was a little hard, because I was coming at it full speed and sliding. He started shining his little head at me, and pointing his finger at me, and I said OK, fine. Then he called "action!" and he was standing by the camera, I came barreling straight at him, spun out, and covered him with sand. And I pointed my finger at him and said, "why are you standing there! You're in the wrong place — you should be behind the camera!" He was that kind of guy, he believed in intimidation. He specialized in extras — he loved to put them down! He could make you feel like a jerk in five seconds, and end your career in five minutes. And for some reason he picked on Liza, I guess because he saw that he could get to her because Liza was a very sensitive girl.



Fred enjoys a cigar in THAT MAN BOLT

SC: You made many films in Italy, like 1990: THE BRONX WARRIORS, which is a particular favorite. What was that time period in your life like?

FW: If the movie industry was still going strong in Italy right now, I would still be there. I had a great time, I enjoyed my life. I got the props that I felt I worked hard for and deserved, more so over there than in America. I spent 10 years there, going back and forth between Italy and the states. I made the three BLACK COBRA films, in which I played a cop. All in all, there were about eight or nine films that I made in Italy, so I had a nice run.

SC: What was it like working with the Italian crews?

FW: It was great, once you get over the shock of people asking for a Coca-Cola or a coffee while you're doing your heavy scene, and you can hear all this talk in the background. You have to get over the shock of hearing this camera that sounds like a washing machine, then it doesn't affect your performance. But it's quite an adjustment for an American to do Italian films. We are so into direct sound, where everything has to be quiet. But they don't care, because they know that you'll go back into the studio later and record the dialogue all over again. So they laugh, tell jokes and everything while you're acting. It's not that they can't record direct sound, it's just they don't believe in it. The director wants to be able to talk to you while you're shooting — "go over there, sit down, no don't do that, light that cigarette, put that down, walk over there." They like to talk.

SC: In 1973, at the height of your movie popularity, you did a Playgirl magazine spread.

FW: Well, Playgirl was hot at that particular time, and it was a way for some of the macho actors to show their stuff. And I did it, but I didn't show my stuff. My stuff is only for my private stash, it's not for the general public to view. So I covered my stuff up with a karate stance, bringing one leg up so you can't see anything. I had two frontal shots—in the other one, I was sitting on the floor and I had a little white pussycat hiding my stuff. I had a full spread, like everybody else did, I just didn't show my stuff. I was immediately after Burt Reynolds. Burt didn't show his stuff either. It didn't hurt my career or help it. It gave me some exposure, I might have picked up some more fans who hadn't seen any Fred Williamson movies yet, but it wasn't really a big deal.

SC: You're 60 years old now, so what's ahead for you?

FW: Another 60. I got another 60 years to go, man! All I want to do is fight, shoot, and kick people's ass and be left standing when the smoke clears.

SC: Your cigar is your trademark. What kind do you smoke?

FW: In the 1970's, when I was spending a lot of time in Jamaica, I bought a little plantation over there. And I had four little white people working for me on my plantation in Jamaica, making my own cigars. It's a Jamaican leaf with Dominican wrap. So, I've got my own cigars. They taste like a candy bar. The only over-the-counter cigar that I'll smoke is an Arturo Fuente, if I want a change of pace. I don't like strong cigars that make you want to spit all the time. My cigars, if you only smoke half of it, you can eat the rest! They're that good. My cigars are dipped in rum first, then they're dried out, then dipped in liqueur, and they're rolled while they're wet with liqueur, then dried. These four little white folks in Jamaica grow it, roll it, then they send me my share and they get to keep what they want, and they live off the land, selling what they can.

SC: Have you thought about starting your own brand of cigar?

FW: Why? I don't want some punk walking around, looking like a faggot, smoking my cigar. Forget about it. Ω

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FILM REVIEWS

JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME (1968).

Director Alain Resnais' work has often focused on the subjects of Time, Memory and Loss, as evidenced by arthouse gems such as *LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD*, *MURIEL* and *PROVIDENCE*. In this instance, he also places Love in the center ring, and emerges with one of his loopyest (yet surprisingly accessible) films. Utilizing a conventional science fiction concept (time travel), he spins a uniquely tantalizing, intimate and enigmatic puzzle.

Claude Rich stars as Claude Ridder, a writer who has recently attempted suicide; yet before he can leave the hospital, he's approached to be a test-subject at a mysterious research facility. All they ask is for one day of his time, and since he's got nothing else in life, he agrees. At their rural compound, Ridder learns that their research topic involves time itself and how to travel through it, and since their earlier experiments with mice seem to have succeeded, they now need a human subject. Claude is their man (because if it doesn't work, after all, the guy wanted to die in the first place), and their plan is to send him back into his own past — exactly one year ago, for only one minute.

The machine itself is marvelous creation; a lumpy, almost organic-looking chamber with rods jutting out of the top, which looks like a cross between a human brain and a Thanksgiving turkey. Inside it, Claude reclines in a giant beanbag chair. Unfortunately, the experiment goes out of control, and he finds himself bouncing between random moments of his life. Suddenly unstuck in time (a la *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*), Claude re-experiences snippets from his past, which mixes moments of love, doubt, confusion, happiness, and even day-to-day routine — often in the form of tiny fragments, shuffled about or replayed like a scratched record. In the process, we slowly piece together his romance with the lovely but unpredictable Catrine (Olga Georges-Picot, best known to US-audiences as Countess Alexandrovna in Woody Allen's *LOVE AND DEATH*), why it ended, and how this led to his fateful suicide attempt. Meanwhile, the scientists running this botched experiment frantically try to retrieve him, even as Claude begins repeating moments from the beginning of this movie.

The performances are all fine, but eventually take a backseat to the film's brilliantly-edited structure, which brings out a playfulness that's often lacking in Resnais' work. In the process, he creates an altogether different brand of sci-fi, which uses its technological backdrop for a deeper analysis of human existence, and forces the viewer to put the pieces in the correct order. Full of insight, humor and mystery, this transforms a human life into a patchwork of pure cinema, and deserves a spot next to Chris Marker's *LA JETTE* in your video collection.

GENESIS (Blackest Heart; 1998).

Nacho Cerdá burst onto the cinema scene with his grim featurette *AFTERMATH* (which was actually his second effort, following a USC-lensed, death-obsessed short entitled *THE AWAKENING*). After that far-too-intimate glimpse into a doctor's autopsy procedures, what could you possibly do for an encore? Proving he's no one-hit wonder, *GENESIS* is an equally engrossing 28-minute vision, which uses the death motif for an extremely different agenda, fraught with twisted emotions and obsession.

Pep Tosar plays a sculptor who's diligently working on his latest full-size figure, made in the image of his deceased love. Still grieving for her, he has reason to worry when his artwork begins to bleed

— but not as much as when he discovers a wound on his own back, corresponding with the one on his sculpture. Yes, even in death, there's still a connection between the two, as this artwork-tribute oozes and bleeds and begins to take on the vestiges of humanity. But at what expense? Well, you can predict that the results aren't going to be upbeat, as Tosar begins transforming, amidst fragmented, nightmarish visions, and ultimately takes a kitchen knife to himself.

Nowhere near as disgusting as *AFTERMATH*, this is a more internalized nightmare, which taps into deep and primal emotions. No question, this understands the depth of grief that one man can attain. There's no dialogue, as Cerdá wisely lets his striking visuals and Tosar's tormented performance spin the tale. Gorgeously photographed and edited, in 35mm widescreen, this is a powerful vignette of sacrifice, accomplished with a craftsmanship that's rarely seen in this type of material. Lyrical, tragic and horrific in the most artful sense, this not only proves Cerdá's range, but solidifies his reputation as one of the most unsettling new filmmakers of this era.

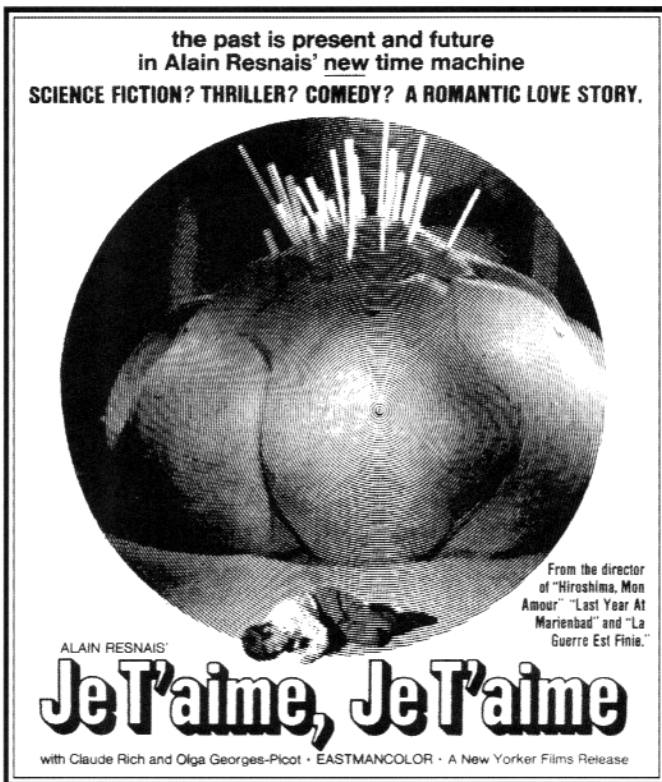
THE MILKY LIFE [La Vida Lactea] (VSoM; 1993).

Mickey Rooney has had one of the most eccentric film careers imaginable, from being at the top of the Hollywood shitheap in his youth, to such later, certifiably-insane projects as Preminger's LSD-comedy *SKIDOO*, *THE MANIPULATOR*, and *EVERYTHING'S DUCKY* (a talking-duck comedy co-starring Buddy Hackett). In the process, you can't help but admire an actor who's so quick to put his dignity on hold, with such half-baked passion. Believe it or not, this is one of Mickey's weirdest gigs, with director Juan Esterlich treating this crackpot concept like it had genuine artistic validity. Boy, was *he* wrong!

Set within the grounds of a palatial estate, Mick plays billionaire Barry Cortez Reilly, who retires on his 80th birthday, accompanied by all of his family-leeches. But what good is having more money than God, if you can't live life the way you want to? So off goes the respectable tuxedo, and on goes a *diaper*, as Reilly decides to spend the rest of his life like a carefree baby, with his money-hungry family forced to care for him. Reilly even hires a wet-nurse (*BAGDAD CAFE*'s Marianne Sägbrecht), builds a gigantic crib, and waddles around in an oversized diaper. It's not a pretty sight, but you'll laugh your ass off as Rooney's fat gut hangs over his Mega-Pampers, he squeezes into a giant high-chair and sucks at Marianne's huge breasts.

Amidst long scenes of Mickey and his nanny playing, bathing, bonding, and slowly falling in love, his asshole kin are selling off the furniture in order to continue their lavish lifestyle. Even more unexpected, after a burglary-based knock on the head, Reilly becomes a *real* infant — who develops baby teeth, rejuvenates his own cells, and converses with his great-grandson in gurgly baby-talk. In the process, all of the silly subplots (romance, tragedy and family healing) are lost in wake of Rooney's bizarre plight.

Dubbed into Spanish, with English subtitles, I missed Mickey's distinctive voice, but still enjoyed watching him at his most self-deprecating — looking like Lawrence Tierney after being stuffed into a trash compactor. Co-starring William Hootkins as Reilly's fat son, this is deeper, darker and more deranged than the goofy premise would have you expect. Conceived with all of the best intentions, but more deserving of a camp fanfare, thank god it's only 77 minutes long.



GLOSSARY

to help you enter
THE
COOL WORLD

COOL	hip, good, invulnerable
HEART	courage
PIECE	a gun
PAD	house, home
JUNK	heroin
JUNKY	drug addict
STICKS	marijuana
SOUNDS	music
SIDES	records
SHORT	automobile
DIG IT	understand
FUZZ	police
RUMBLE	gang war

THE COOL WORLD (Shocking Videos; 1964).

Back in the '60s, the late Shirley Clarke was one of the pioneers of the US independent film scene, with such gritty efforts as THE CONNECTION and PORTRAIT OF JASON. Her second feature, THE COOL WORLD, had a healthy theatrical run during its initial release — publicized as a critically-acclaimed art film for its Upper East Side premiere, and later as an gritty drugs-'n'-gangs drama when it made its way to 42nd Street's Lyric (in an odd way, they were both correct). Filmed on the mean streets of Harlem, this is a vibrant, joyous, ultimately caustic portrait of life in the ghetto, which utilizes a b&w, cinema-verité-style backdrop to spin its (even now) blunt tale.

Avoiding the usual A-to-Z narrative, this bounces between the story of a young Black teenager's life, the daily routine of the surrounding characters, and the raw energy of city itself. Hampton Clayton stars as Richard "Duke" Curtis, a baby-faced kid who's also a member of a local gang (the Royal Pythons) and dreams of someday earning neighborhood respect by becoming a "cold killer." His first step is to earn enough money from selling loose joints (for a buck apiece) to buy a gun, with his naive inner monologue obsessing about how cool his life will be once he's packing heat. Later, when a Python's father runs out on his kid,

the club transforms the apartment into a makeshift gang-squat.

In supporting roles, there's a pre-MOD SQUAD Clarence Williams III as a crazed junkie pimp named Blood. He provides their clubhouse with a teenage whore named Luanne (Yolanda Rodriguez), who puts out for the Pythons (for a small donation, of course). Plus there's Mel Stuart (ALL IN THE FAMILY's Henry Jefferson) as a con man. Of course, the minute Duke dips his wick into Luanne, he's smitten, with their first Harlem-hiatus (a now-nostalgic trip to Coney Island) jumpstarting the chaotic finale of gang violence, murder and abusive cops.

In the end, THE COOL WORLD offers sympathy for its characters, yet never whitewashes its subject matter. Focusing on this gang mentality, it conveys their humanity — as these teens do their best to survive amidst this everyday world of addicts, hookers, slums, broken families, and violence. Laced with legitimately hip dialogue (hence, the Glossary included in its press materials), for its day, this was provocative fare, told with a keen eye. Mal Waldron's jazzy score is excellent (with Dizzy Gillespie turning up for a curbside serenade), as is the overall sound design, which captures an aural tapestry of this time and place. Written by Clarke and Carl Lee (who plays Priest, a bad-ass pimp), the film rarely falters in its uncompromising drama. Steeped in urban truths, this helped lay the groundwork for the next 35 years of Black cinema, and while, arguably, Clarke's best and most accessible work, due to home-video-challenged producer Frederick Wiseman, it remains her least seem.

WET DREAMS [a.k.a. Dreams of 13] (Shocking Videos; 1974).

Although in French, with no subtitles, few were needed for this surreal, X-rated anthology from the '70s, which is more akin to experimental art than porn. More trippy than erotic, this overseas oddity consists of 13 sexual dreams, "composed" by Max Fischer and Jim Haynes, directed by various filmmakers of disparate talent, and reveling in fetishes and sexual freedom (which will leave the average deviant scratching his head, instead of his johnson).

The more amusing installments include Lee Kraft's "Le Plombier," which puts a sexually-graphic spin on Chaplin-esque silents, with a li'l tramp seduced by a sex-starved missus; "Another Wet Dream," by Jen Jorgen Thorsen

(QUIET DAYS IN CLICHY), has a blue-collar worker falling for a comely lunch-wagon worker, with each pleasuring themselves by the possibilities (she with the aid of an electric toothbrush); while Falcon Stuart's "The Happy Necrophiliacs" has a US cowboy in Amsterdam seduced by a pair of lovelies, who pull out the whips, have a fridge full of dildos, and make this tourist feel right at home. Sam Rotterdam (a/k/a Dusan Makavejev) also submits "Politfuck," a 6-minute seduction consisting of a couple's dueling tongues and snarling animal foreplay.

Without question, Lee Kraft's "The Banner" is the conceptual stand-out — a dazzling, 4-minute-long, initially-baffling stew of naked, painted bodies, who slowly squirm themselves into the shape of a human Old Glory. But what makes this flick historically notable? No question, it's the 12-minute episode directed by Nicholas Ray — yes, the same acclaimed filmmaker who helmed classics like REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE and JOHNNY GUITAR. Even better, he takes on the title role of "The Janitor," with eye-patched Ray sweeping up and imagining himself as a great (but craggy) lover. Complete with girls one-third his age pulling up his droopy socks, and an orgy with ol' Nick's crotch as the center of their nubile attention, this is a bittersweet tidbit, which also offers up the ridiculous sight of Ray pleasuring his broom, as it's betwixt his legs.

Of course, given 13 chances, there are going to be a few stinkers in the mix, such as a close-up landscape of naked flesh, which is stylish but dull. Others are mercifully brief, with the silliest involving a montage of giant sci-fi penis artwork and an animated barrage of sex jokes, while "composer" Fischer provides the blandest moments. Only 80 minutes long, this is best reserved for stoned art-house degenerates, looking for kinky thrills.

THE TELEPHONE BOOK (Shocking Videos; 1971).

Far from the usual X-rated oddity, this is a mind-roasting chunk of NYC-lensed, experimental sexploitation, aesthetically akin to such raucous, counter-culture assaults as DePalma's HI MOM and GREETINGS. Directed by Nelson Lyon and shot in black-and-white, this doesn't make a lick of sense, but always displays a singularly skewed, comic vision, sprinkled with now-familiar faces.

LAUGH-IN regular Sarah Kennedy stars as the blonde, cupie-doll-voiced Alice, who has a lonely life and groovy furnishings (just check out her American flag bedspread). That changes after a trenchcoated, faceless stranger rings her up with an obscene phone call which is so inspiring that she considers it "a work of art." As his calls become more frequent, she becomes more receptive, and decides to track down this desirable phone pervert. Along the way, Alice meets a pre-SPACE 1999 Barry Morse as stag-film-star Har Poon, who's auditioning naked women and ends up in a bed full of squirming limbs; Roger C. Carmel (STAR TREK's Harry Mudd) as an exhibitionist degenerate who pays Alice to tell him dirty stories; and William Hickey (PRIZZI'S HONOR) as Alice's first sexual conquest, whose 12-inch tentpole won't go down, and only Alice can relieve his frustration. The supporting cast also includes a young Jill Clayburgh as Alice's best friend, Warhol-relics Ultra Violet and Ondine, plus [Capt.] Arthur Haggerty (HOME MOVIES) as a D.A.

Eventually, Alice encounters this object of desire, who wears a pig mask and describes his descent from astronaut candidate(!) to aural phone-sex deviant. Played by velvet-voiced Norman Rose, he provided voice-overs for gigs like JABBERWALK, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, and ironically enough, commercials for NY Telephone. Unfortunately, we never hear all of his seductive handiwork, even as we see it working its wonders on everyone from a high school cheerleader to an ancient old broad. If this wasn't disjointed enough, the story is broken up with scripted "confessions" from random fetishists (including Dolph Sweet), who describe their own obsessions.

Unlike most avant-garde efforts of the time, this (happily) never takes itself seriously, but still overflows with gleefully pretentious visuals. That's never more apparent than in the final minutes, when the movie bursts into vibrant color, mixing extremely lewd animation with Alice's ultimate gratification. Less X-rated for its bare-flesh than for its raunchy conversations and deviant attitude, this is an impossible to categorize, lovably out-to-lunch artifact.

The story of a girl who falls in love with the world's greatest obscene phone call.



Rosebud Films Presents A Merwin Bloch Production

"The Telephone Book"

Starring Roger C. Carmel, Norman Rose and Barry Morse as "Har Poon"

Introducing Sarah Kennedy Associate Producer Steve Sirkin Music by Nate Sasser

Written and Directed by Nelson Lyon Produced by Merwin Bloch
From Rosebud Releasing Corporation (X)

THE STORY OF MANKIND (J4HI; 1957).

Long considered one of the most misguided Hollywood epics of all time, this belabored all-star fantasy actually exceeds its rotten-reputation. Colorful and idiotic, it's a one-of-a-kind fiasco, yet what other movie is going to combine Vincent Price, Dennis Hopper and The Marx Brothers?! Directed by Irwin Allen, years before he became the disaster-blockbuster king with *THE TOWERING INFERNO* and *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE*, this project is his biggest disaster of 'em all.

When mankind announces the invention of the "Super H-Bomb," Heaven convenes an outer space tribunal (atop a cloud, of course) to figure out if the human race is worth saving. Taking the side of us lowly homo sapiens is Ronald Colman as "The Spirit of Man," while the devilish "Mr. Scratch" (dapper Vincent Price) argues that we should all be allowed to blow ourselves to Hell. To state their opposing cases, Price and Colman wander throughout history, demonstrating the pros and cons of mankind, as this framework unleashes a torrent of embarrassed supporting actors.

Amidst moments by Helen of Troy, Moses, Marie Antoinette, and DeVinci, we also get John Carradine as an Egyptian pharaoh, Virginia Mayo playing Cleopatra with all the subtlety of Bettie Page in front of the Camera Club, and drunken Nero (Peter Lorre!) hosting a depraved, bongo-fueled interpretive dance. Forty-something Hedy Lamarr turns up as the teenaged Joan of Arc, Cesar Romero is a Spaniard visiting Queen Elizabeth (Agnes Moorehead), while a way-too-intense Dennis Hopper is a method-acting Napoleon. As for the Marx's, Chico plays a naysayer to Columbus' voyage, Harpo is a harp-playing Sir Isaac Newton; and (in the movie's only legitimately amusing sequence) Groucho is a wisecracking pilgrim who buys Manhattan from the Indians. Of course, those are only the biggest names who were corralled into this nightmare, which leads all the way up to WWII and the atomic bomb.

Thinly based on Hendrik Willem Van Loon's once-remembered volume, this crams all of human history into a wretchedly-acted, 100-minutes-long Cliff Notes. Awash with mismatched stock footage, backdrops that look like were loaned-out by a high school drama pageant, and a cop-out finale, its only saving grace is the teaming of Colman and Price, who have a solid rapport. Laced with dull, moralistic soliloquies (usually by Colman, explaining how good and noble we can be), you get the feeling Irwin actually believed this claptrap. Of course, there's one thing Allen didn't expect — as Price points out the worst moments of human history (the Salem Witch Trials, slavery, genocide, assassination), he makes the better argument of the two, and ultimately had me agreeing that mankind sucks.

TOMORROW NEVER COMES (Video Vortex; 1977).

Earlier this year, Oliver Reed passed away before his time, at the age of 61. Of course, with his hard-living and non-stop-drinking reputation, it's a surprise the guy lasted as long as he did. His death prompted me to dig up this starring gig, which proves how Reed could make even the most generic slop worth a look. A Canadian-lensed B-movie thriller from UK director Peter Collinson (*THE PENTHOUSE*), it's equipped with a solid cast, but little else.

Reed is top-billed as a gruff police detective on the verge of retiring, but on his last day of work, he's pulled into one last case. That's all due to edgy Stephen McHattie, who returns to his hometown, only to learn that his woman (Susan George) has ditched him, his apartment is history, and his life is swirling down the loo. Tracking down George, he blows a gasket -- shooting a cop in the gut and taking his sexy ex captive in her cabana -- and it's up to Reed to play the unorthodox negotiator in this protracted hostage drama, who tries everything from a drugged six-pack and a professional hitman, to a face-to-face showdown.

Keeping us (barely) awake, there's Donald Pleasence as a doctor, called in to judge McHattie's level of brain damage; Raymond Burr pops up as the police chief; Paul Koslo (who, in *SC#14*, recalled how he was fired from the flick by dick-headed Collinson) plays a likeably no-nonsense cop; plus an appearance by Sammy Snyder (the creepy lil' kid from *THE PIT*).

Reed keeps his cool throughout (but always looks a bit sweaty, like he's in need of a drink), while McHattie makes a believable psycho, whose claustrophobic scenes with the trapped Ms. George have a crude power. Too bad the rest of it has all the reality of a T.J. HOOKER episode, complete with an underwhelming

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CEDRIC HARDWICKE • CESAR ROMERO
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AMAZING!
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TECHNICOLOR
PRESENTED BY WARNER BROS.

Screen Play by IRWIN ALLEN & CHARLES BENNETT
Based on the Book by HENDRIK VAN LOON
Produced and Directed by IRWIN ALLEN

finale. In fact, most of the production looks like slapped together shit, from its hole-riddled script to inappropriate score. Clocking in at a mercifully-brief 87 minutes, the most entertainment value comes from its crude dubbing, which jettisons even mildly foul language, in favor of humorously wimpy alternatives.

THE DEVIL AT YOUR HEELS (J4HI; 1981).

Back when I was a kid, I watched Evel Knievel risking life and limb with his motorcycle jumps, and wondered just how brain-damaged you'd have to be to choose this type of death-wish career. Well, if you take Evel, knock about forty points off his IQ, and strip him of all money and charisma, you've got unsung daredevil Ken Carter, the subject of this 102-minute documentary, directed by Robert Fortier and presented by the National Film Board of Canada.

For those unfamiliar with Carter's career (which would include anyone able to read at above a 3rd-grade comprehension level), he spent over 20 years entertaining white-trash audiences by leaping his POS used-cars over obstacles, three times a week, as "The Mad Canadian." This film follows Ken for five years, and chronicles his obsessive death-defying quest — to jump a jet-powered car *one-full-mile* over the St. Lawrence Seaway, from Canada to the US side, and crash-land into a target of roses. Yes, you read that correctly. The only thing stopping Carter is (1) a quarter million dollars and (2) inventing a rocket-car that won't

nose-dive into the river. So, is this idiot totally nuts? Of course he is, and combined with his pathetic luck, that's what makes this film so damned entertaining.

Ill-conceived at every turn, with every imaginable setback, we watch in disbelief as the inept construction crew builds his 85-foot-tall ramp on soggy ground; his car's fuel tank explodes (twice); Carter's safety suit doesn't fit, because he's too fat; and a TV-network backs out of televising it live, since they think the jump is going to kill him. There's even a visit by Evel Knievel (considered the "second best daredevil in the world" by the ever-modest Carter), who looks stunned at their slipshod preparation. You've also got false-starts galore, angry backers, a finished ramp that's covered with bumps, and a finale so pathetic that it's not only a spectacular debacle, but an unintentional comedy of errors. No question, Carter was a foolish, egotistical clown, blissfully ignoring the laws of science and self-survival, and this is a fitting testament to his death-defying dream.

STAMPING GROUND (1971).

Shot at the 1970 Rotterdam Pop Festival, this feature-length concert documentary highlights a number of seminal late-'60s bands, but for some reason, never got a respectable release in the US. Sort of a EuroWoodstock, this riverside, outdoor music-fest overflows with flower power ambience, good tunes, and a wide array of legendary performers. Directed by Jason Pohland (and co-directed by THE VANISHING's George Sluzier), the movie provides plenty of nostalgia for old farts, as well as refreshingly spontaneous performances.

Unlike the chaos, confusion and mud of Woodstock, this is a sunny, upbeat event, lacking any bad vibes. It even rains at one point, but without much effect. As for the bands, Santana book-ends the proceedings, which includes Al Stewart's "Zero She Flies", Canned Heat playing "Human Condition" (and passing around a joint, in between tunes), Marc Bolan and T-Rex doing "Pavilions of the Sun", Country Joe McDonald, The Byrds, plus more obscure acts such as It's a Beautiful Day, Family and The Flock. Let's not forget a face-painted Dr. John going the wildman route for "Mardi Gras Day"; Jefferson Airplane taking a nose-dive with a limp, badly-mike'd rendition of "White Rabbit"; and it's all capped-off with a sweaty, 10-minute set courtesy of Pink Floyd, who perform "Saucerful of Secrets" and "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun".

Primarily focusing on the music, there's a minimum of backstage interviews, which only tell us how cool Holland is towards long-hairs or provide innocuous insights from Paul Kantner and Grace Slick. As for the audience, this revels in hippie chicks groovin' to the music, nude swims, and casual drug intake. Briskly edited (to 90 minutes) and exceptionally photographed, it's equipped with all of the psychedelic visuals and fish-eye lenses so prevalent in US counterculture flicks. Sprinkled with lovably gratuitous tracking shots of speeding down a canal, or flying over the area, one of the cameramen was Jan DeBont, decades before he became a Hollywood whore with *TWISTER* and *THE HAUNTING*.

STREET OF DREAMS (1988).

Never released on this side of the globe, this Australian, self-titled "musical mirror maze" is one of the more jaw-dropping oddities I've had the pleasure to witness. A feature-length, free-form documentary on singer/pop-icon Tiny Tim, it's an imaginative, altogether joyous portrait of the man who brought "Tip-Toe Thru the Tulips With Me" to the public forefront (and gave me a chance to stay up past my bedtime when he married Miss Vicki on THE TONIGHT SHOW in 1969).

Ten years in the making, this cobbles together a fantastic array of footage, much of it revolving around the Sydney amusement area, Luna Park, circa 1978, where Tiny (long past the height of his popularity) tried to set the Professional, Non-Stop Singing Record. Following the film's fragmented route, we watch him tooling around Australia before this marathon song-fest; dressed as a king-size Mickey Mouse; Tiny (and his film crew) lost in a Hall of Mirrors; a seemingly-pissed Tim popping an oil can of fosters, with a topless flat-chested chick on his bed; and even pays a visit to Tiny's ancient mother, who shows off childhood photos. The only tiring moments have Tiny discussing his devotion to Christ and the Bible. Ahh, but that's only the tip of the weirdness, my friends.

Back at Luna Park, Tiny (lugging his brown-paper-shopping-bagged ukulele) launches into a medley of classic tunes ("Pennies From Heaven", "Don't Fence Me In", and even "Stayin' Alive"), which are all given his uniquely-vibrato treatment. In the process, director Martin Sharp (an Aussie artist, who also worked to restore Luna Park) expertly integrates these on-stage songs, with insights into Tiny's past (some of them none too flattering). We get footage from his wedding to Miss Vicki, and while most 45-year-old men would relish a chance to schtupp a teen-bride, Tiny admits that their bliss didn't last due to his belief that birth control was a Satanic invention and that "S-E-X can not be used, except for the glory of God's name and creating life" — which led to an extremely unsatisfied Vicki.

Along the way, Sharp also unveils a more sobering agenda, as we get a history lesson of this beloved amusement park, highlighted by a tragic incident on the Ghost Train ride, which burst into flame and claimed seven lives. Questioning if Mob arson was to blame, this bumper of a sideline only leaves an undoubtedly personal, yet ill-conceived aftertaste...Clocking in at 108 minutes, STREET OF DREAMS is, first and foremost, a Tiny Tim overdose. Although newcomers might be perplexed, it's all so unique and inspired that I couldn't stop smiling, as it captures his humanity, hilarity, and belovedly twisted lifestyle. It's not difficult to imagine that Tiny Tim was an off-stage weirdo, but it's gratifying to see it chronicled for posterity, while realizing he actually exceeded expectations.

SEX BY ADVERTISEMENT (Something Weird Video; 1969).

Director Joel M. Reed is best known for his enduring grue-comedy BLOOD-SUCKING FREAKS (as well as justifiably lesser-known pics like THE G.I. EXECUTIONER), and this early effort is one of his weirdest. Framed as a steamy mock-expose, which blows the lid off of the post-"sexual revolution" proliferation of sexy advertising, this painfully-inept b&w oddity is merely an excuse to cobble together several nudity-laced vignettes, all lovingly aimed at the gutter.

Hosted by a scholarly female expert in debauchery, who often provides commentary on the sex scenes, we witness a sleazy marriage broker suckering in an old, crippled man; imported "domestics" forced to be submissive love slaves; and passed-out-from-drugs cuties turned into unwilling porno-shoot subjects. Tossing in every possible fetish for the '60s trenchcoat crowd, there's S&M, voyeurism, group sex, nude body painting, as well as a guy who's only attracted to ugly chicks ("I like things that are ratty looking, dirty and smelly."). There's also a scumbag theatrical manager who pimps his pretty young actress-wannabes (when he isn't working part-time at the city dump!).

In a send-up of its own exploitation genre, there's an interview with a pretentious, beret-wearing nudie-pic director, who explains that his work (the latest featuring "a homosexual, a lesbian, two West Point cadets, and four high-school girls, thrown together during a storm") is "superior to anything that's done in Europe, by the so-called greats." The most amazing vignette involves a chic leather-and-bondage-gear manufacturer's initiation into S&M, when a

Central Park sicko (played by Reed himself, who looks like Bud Cort on bad speed) buys his homemade belt for an outdoor quickie, and later invites him to a masked orgy of well-to-do deviants (which pre-dates EYES WIDE SHUT by 30 years).

One thing's for sure — Reed has a knack for casting dirty ol' farts, since these guys look like the real item. There's good use of NYC backdrops, from his own master-and-submissive encounter in Central Park, to the NYC subway, back when they had usable public bathrooms! The sex scenes are often hilarious, such as when one gal gets raped on a bathroom floor, but displays all of the energy of someone online at the DMV. At least Reed keeps the stretch marks to a minimum, while his cinematic seediness had me nostalgic for the sticky-floored grindhouses of yore.

CAN HEIRONYMUS MERKIN EVER FORGET MERCY HUMPPPE AND FIND TRUE HAPPINESS? (1969).

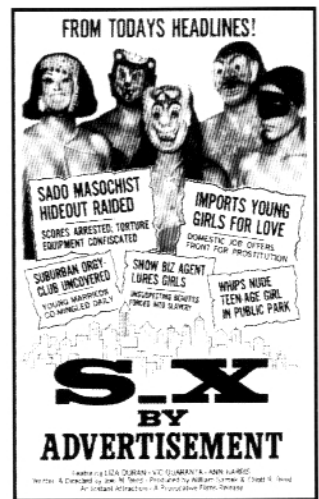
Nowadays, it's not uncommon for a popular acting-celeb to stretch their talents by directing, with indie results such as Steve Buscemi's TREE'S LOUNGE or Sean Penn's THE INDIAN RUNNER. In earlier days, this type of career ego-tism went more lovingly unchecked, and here's a perfect example. Directed, co-written and starring Anthony Newley (of THE GARBAGE PAIL KIDS MOVIE fame), this deliciously wrongheaded, vanity production is a Fellini-esque, psychedelic-musical-fantasy-bio, sprinkled with enough Broadway-style-indulgence and cheap T&A to look like ALL THAT JAZZ's slow-witted, untalented cousin. Originally rated X (but now pretty tame), *auteur du jour* Newley plays a womanizing film director who has hit his 40th birthday. Sitting in the middle of an empty seaside, accompanied by items from his past, a film crew, and his young children (played by Newley's off-screen kids), Merkin re-examines (and re-lives) his life, loves, and misspent youth.

Little Merkin begins as a Vaudeville-driven child, only to have the devilish Eddie Filth (Milton Berle, initially seen in horns and furry Pan legs) teaching him the joys of sex, until he has a line of willing-women queued up at his bed. Merkin eventually encounters Polyester Poontang (Joan Collins, who was not only Newley's wife at the time, but didn't yet look like a Madame Tussaud's exhibit), who seduces him during an ill-conceived, Zodiac-inspired musical number. Merkin also divulges the truth about his only true love, the virginal Mercy Humppe

(1969 Playboy Playmate of the Year Connie Kreski), with this Lolita-esque nymph seduced by Merkin after a carousal ride and lascivious tune ("Sweet Love Child").

In addition to colorfully-named conquests like Filligree Fondle and Trampolena Whambang, the script takes the gigolo idea to its surreal limits, when poor, schlong-exhausted Merkin has a (symbolically-faceless) automaton doubling for him during casual sex. Admittedly, its movie-within-a-movie framework was extreme for the time, with Newley (in shadow) playing his own director, while the on-screen crew attempts to figure out an ending for this movie (hint: They never do, and neither did Newley).

In supporting roles, George Jessel pops in-and-out as "the Presence"; Stubby Kaye is a writer; while Victor Spinetti turns up as a bitchy film critic. Meanwhile, Milton nails his oddball role, from heading up a black mass to dosing Merkin with a pharmaceutical "trip". The film's biggest liability is Newley himself, who has the sex-appeal of a Reno lounge lizard, contributes several painful songs, and gives his own bare-ass far too much screen time. Even more debilitating, the movie loses its loopy edge whenever it believes its own sentimental self-importance. Still, this is a one-of-a-kind goulash — a must-see for counterculture-masochists (like me) who often need a fix from this indulgent era.



JE T'AIME MOI NON PLUS [I Love You, I Don't] (Luminous; 1975).

This eccentric sex-outing from renowned (and often controversial) songwriter-filmmaker Serge Gainsbourg is the epitome of Frogland artfuck trash. Beautifully shot, with good looking stars and a desolate backdrop, it's difficult not to fall prey to its out-of-control, ultra-pretentious charms. Hoping to be as excessive and scandalous as Gainsbourg's legacy of songs (over 500, including tunes written for hotties such as Catherine Deneuve and Isabelle Adjani), the title comes from his 1969 pop duet with Gainsbourg and common-law wife Jane Birkin, who repeatedly doffs her clothes as this movie's lead actress.

Warhol-icon Joe Dallesandro stars as Krassky, a brutish dump-truck driver, who, accompanied by his gay partner in refuse, Padovan (Hugues Quester), pulls into an out-of-the-way diner with waifish Johnny (Birkin) behind the counter. Ahh, the instant Krassky and Johnny's eyes meet, their lust is obvious, which has jealous Padovan pissed off. Sticking around for awhile, the omni-sexual Dallesandro falls for her boyish physique, but once in bed, he's unable to perform unless he screws Johnny up the ass. Unfortunately, this makes her scream so loudly that he's tossed out of every flophouse. Krassky also gets angry when Johnny wears a feminine dress for one of their rendezvous, yet firmly refutes the notion that he's actually queer.

Set against a symbolically-garbage-strewn backdrop, the story has plenty of Gallic charm but little coherence (and often had me wondering if they were making it all up as they went along). There's a local striptease contest that turns ugly (particularly when we see the contestants), a vicious barroom brawl, a trip to the roller derby, Birkin repeatedly stuffing phallic food into her dripping mouth, plus a young, curly-haired Gerard Depardieu turns up as a "fairy" — riding a white horse and boasting that his "sausage" has sent a fair share of lovers to the ER.

A self-confessed misogynist (who passed away in '91), Serge proves it by writing such a sleazy role for longtime loved one Birkin, who's given plenty of lengthy love scenes, even though her scrawny, androgynous frame isn't the most erotic image. Somebody give this girl a cheeseburger, because she looks like she's wasting away! Meanwhile, there's appropriately surreal photography by Willy Curant (who worked for Godard and Robbe-Grillet), while Gainsbourg tosses everything into this laughably decadent love story, and lets the audience sort it all out.

SAVE THE CHILDREN (1973).

Few people seem to remember this concert extravaganza, despite one of the more amazing rosters of music performers ever packed into one film. Most likely, that's because present-day moviegoers in search of some cool tunes usually want 'em straight up, unlike the socially-conscious sermonizing which peppers this flick. Similar to a Chicago-based WATTSTAX (but sorely lacking its streetwise humor), it was filmed during the summer of '72, at the Black Exposition — a 5-day event sponsored by Jesse Jackson's People United to Save Humanity (whose theme, that year, was "Save the Children").

Now that the backstory is out of the way, let's get onto the music! There's Marvin Gaye, The Staple Singers, The Chi-Lites, The Main Ingredient, The Temptations, The O'Jays (in super-funky superhero attire!), plus shirtless Isaac Hayes tickling the ivories with "Stormy Weather." In addition to a few performers I don't have a clue about (such as the underwhelming Zulema), appearances are made by jazzman Cannonball Adderly, Don Cornelius and Dick Gregory, while a lengthy turn by gospel superstars Albertina Walker and Rev. James Cleveland is a good time for sinners to raid their fridge for a few cold beers.

The final hour minimizes the filler and pumps up the funk, with Bill Withers doing "Lean on Me", Curtis Mayfield, Robert Flack & Quincy Jones' rendition of "On a Clear Day," plus Gladys Knight and the Pips ripping loose for "I Heard It through the Grapevine." Even Sammy Davis Jr. takes a respite from his honky Rat Pack cronies to revisit his roots, and though the crowd is initially hostile, he raps honestly with them and eventually wins 'em over with "I've Got to Be Me." Let's not forget The Jackson Five performing "A.B.C.," back when Michael still looked like he was spawned from human parents.

Director Stan Lathan (BEAT STREET, AMAZING GRACE) isn't subtle, as he piles on the hand wringing about rescuing the next generation. Too often, just as the movie picks up some energy from a kick-ass musical number, it's frittered away by suddenly wandering through the convention hall or watching the vendors. In the biggest gaffe, they end the flick with footage of starving Third World children (backed up with Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On"), plus a lengthy epilogue by Jesse Jackson (who has since eliminated his big afro and Mr. T-sized gold medallion), which only leaves a bummar aftertaste. Though crammed with terrific music, this is a mixed bag, due to filmmakers so focused on their heavy agenda that they're blind to its entertainment deficiencies.

WARNING SHOT (1967).

A post-FUGITIVE David Janssen hoped to jumpstart his big-screen career with projects like THE GREEN BERETS, MAROONED, and this L.A. cop drama. Alas, none of them did the trick, and only proved that some actors should never attempt that TV-to-movies leap (if Hollywood would only remember this, we could've avoided the excruciating legacy of Ted Danson, Shelley Long and David Caruso). In this instance, the result is a bland yet well-constructed crime yarn,

with a celeb-packed supporting cast and based on a novel by Whit Masterson (who also penned the source material that became Orson Welles' TOUCH OF EVIL).

Janssen plays Sgt. Tom Valens who, while on stake-out for a "psycho killer," shoots and kills a fleeing suspect. Oops, the corpse turns out to be an upstanding citizen, and Valens suddenly becomes a poster boy for police brutality, as he's put on trial for the murder. Again playing an innocent schmuck accused of a crime he didn't commit, Janssen is so stoic, he's almost inert. Meanwhile, his character begins an unofficial investigation into the victim's secretly-seedy background, which includes a mistress, an unsorrowful widow, a dead dog, and getting beaten up by assailants who dress like Richie Cunningham.

Along the way, he encounters Lillian Gish as a dotty witness, Joan Collins as Valens' ex-wife, a pre-HART TO HART Stephanie Powers as the victim's sexy secretary, Keenan Wynn as Valens' partner, and Steve Allen as a manipulative TV-commentator. Let's not forget judge Carroll O'Connor, lawyer Walter Pidgeon, police chief Ed Begley, and bitchy fashion designer Vito Scotti. But the stand-out supporting role goes to George Grizzard as an apartment building swinger, who helps out Valens in between his sexy conquests.

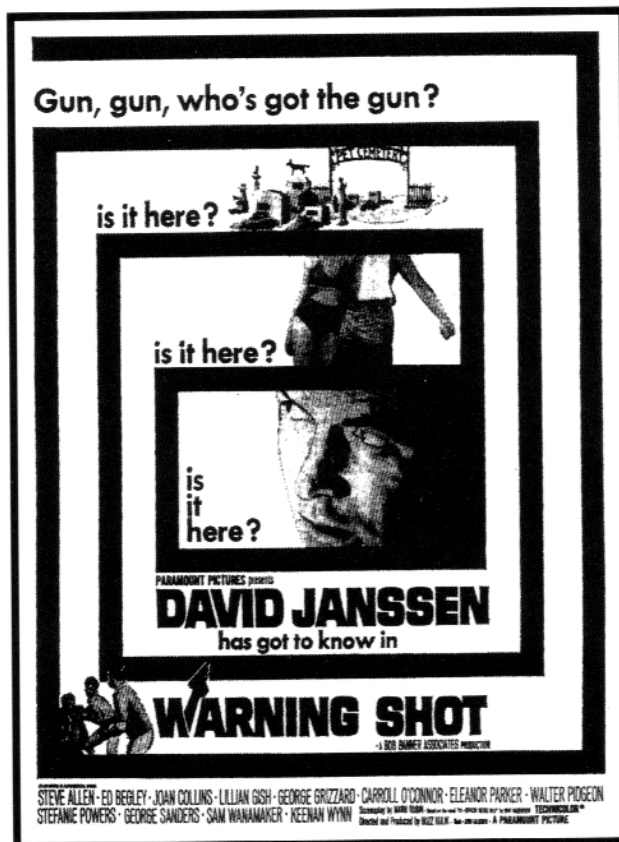
Drenched in a pulpy, dime-store novel veneer, the filmmakers obviously tried to evoke a hard-bitten edge, but most of the

time, it's as artificial as an episode of DRAGNET. Director Buzz Kulik is best known for TV-fare such as BAD RONALD and BRIAN'S SONG, so it's no wonder this looks and plays like a slick "ABC Movie of the Week." Obviously the studio felt the same way, since they dumped it into NYC on a double bill with William Castle's 'comic' THE BUSY BODY. Still, it barrels along like a good B-movie should, and is a fun throwback to the pre-DIRTY HARRY era of tough-cop flicks.

JAPANARAMA VOL.2 (Video International, West Hi 201, 65 Hideri-cho, Sain, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto 615-0065 Japan / \$20 + \$5 postage, payable to Richard Humbert; 1997).

Following in the wake of its first brain-damaged volume (reviewed in SC#14), this 2-hour video compiles the weirdest moments from Japanese TV. Lacking subtitles (or subtlety, for that matter), it's impossible to figure out exactly what's happening at times, but most of it's fueled by simple T&A and a voluntary cruelty that's difficult to fathom. The time around, the mix suffers a bit from sophomore-slump, since the segments run longer, and seem less outrageous.

Game show segments include a program called "Sexy Bust", which features two topless blondes who would make Russ Meyer cream his pants, with happy audience members closely inspecting them; a bevy of Hustler models promote their import video by sitting in a tank of boiling water, in exchange for free promo time; and a kickboxing match includes an Asian Don King-clone and a guy in a bear suit, who, when defeated, spurts a geyser of blood from its forehead.



Not surprising, the most abusive moments are also the most amusing, such as waking folks up with farts in their face; flaming balls rolling toward people's mouths; contestants in a floating wrestling ring are thrown into shark-infested waters; and meat is strapped to a guy's forehead, with a Komodo Dragon unleashed at him. For more prurient pleasures, there's a hot-tub gameshow with topless, all-girl contestants, plus a weather girl named RoboMimi and her peek-aboo metallic bikini. Meanwhile, some of the bits are impossible to interpret, such as a half-dozen men running about town in their underpants, rubbing their asses against anything filthy, in order to see who can create the most impossible stain!

Let's not forget its sampling of Japan's often-surreal TV-commercials, which feature celebrity pitchmen such as Ringo Starr, Bruce Willis, Quentin Tarantino, Brad Pitt, and Liv Tyler. We've got Antonio Banderas and Mel Gibson hawking cars, Jodie Foster selling espresso in a can, Demi Moore for "Jog Mate Protein" in a squeeze tube, a samurai Madonna (with the unlikely tag-line "I'm pure") promoting saki, KISS (in full regalia) enjoying a meal in a Japanese diner and plugging a teen magazine, and even Beavis and Butthead for a breath mint! Although not as consistently crazed as its debut, this is still pretty wacky fare, with any dull moments eliminated with a trusty Fast Forward button.

THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR (1970).

When first released, this critically-acclaimed, drug-fueled melodrama was considered a jolt of reality, as a suburban family is torn apart by the horrors of LSD. Time has not been kind to it though, and nowadays, it's merely a jolt of hand wringing hilarity. First appearing as a CBS TV-movie in 1968, this R-rated theatrical adaptation is bigger, more hysterical, and has all the subtlety of a police battering ram.

Deborah Winters (who reprises her TV role, but now adds some nudity) stars as 16-year-old Maxie Mason, a typical teen who loves rock music, groovy clothes and getting royally stoned! Eli Wallach and Julie Harris play her uptight middle-class parents, whose world is rocked when they find "perfect" li'l Maxie inside her closet, freaking out on a Speed & LSD double-bill ("I hear mountains! I see music!"). Of course, with a pig-headed control freak of a father like Eli, they're lucky she isn't doing shots of battery acid. Meanwhile, Stephen McHattie (giving the film's only subtle performance) is long-haired brother Artie, the family black sheep, who's the only one who can coach Maxie down, as she admits she's "tried all of the grooves, even Horse, but Acid is my scene."

From there on, every stereotype and contrived plot twist is given a work-out, with Maxie eventually running naked down her suburban street and tossed into a psychiatric snake-pit (run by Neremiah Persoff) after a mega-dose of STP. The story bogs down during 'inspiring' sequences, and while her parents freak-out at Maxie's chemical lifestyle, their own medicine and liquor cabinets overflow with legal drugs. The best moments are definitely the most overblown — such as when unsubtle Eli bursts into a drug dealer's East Village love-pad and catches Maxie in the buff. Ultimately, this cautionary tale teaches parents to instantly turn in your kid if they're dealing drugs. How sweet.

Directed by David Greene (who would later helm such hot projects as *ROOTS* and *RICH MAN, POOR MAN*) and with a screenplay by J.P. Miller (*DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES*), the film utilizes Scarsdale exteriors, and co-stars Hal Holbrook (playing a 'with-it' high school principal), Cloris Leachman and Don Scardino as their neighbors, plus Rue McClanahan as one of papa's mistresses. Topped off with a couple generically 'far-out' tunes, courtesy of long-forgotten bands *The Bead Game* and *The Glass Bottle*, this is a lovable relic from a fabulously hallucinogenic era.

THE GIRL (European Trash Cinema; 1986).

Beginning like any average chunk of sexploitation, this Swedish drama winds up ahead of the Cinemax After Dark pack thanks to a starring role by always-reliable Franco Nero, solid production values, and several lovably-immoral plot twists. Director Arne Mattsson also pushes the envelope for prudish US audiences by centering it on a fortysomething's softcore affair with an early-teen (who's wise beyond her years).

Perfectly cast, Nero stars as a Dirty Old Rich Lawyer named John Berg, who tosses aside all respectability after encountering slutty schoolgirl Pat (ponytailed Clare Powney, playing a 14-year-old, but in close-ups, looking her actual age of 23). After class, she offers herself to him (for a reasonable fee, of course) and at first, the married Nero declines. But that attitude doesn't last for long, after a dress-doffing seduction ignites Berg's obsession with Miss Jailbait. A General's daughter, rebellious Pat boasts of her lover to a tabloid reporter, who secretly follows Berg when he whisks his "baby doll" to Genua for a getaway schtupp. Meanwhile, Mrs. Berg is having an affair with a taxi driver, so everything balances out in this horny scenario.

There are plenty of softcore sexual-gymnastics between Pat and Berg (which was undoubtedly an inducement for Nero to take the role), but the script is awash in melodrama, along with low-grade mindgames from manipulative Pat. When the pair are threatened by this ruthless reporter, she has a plan to silence the guy. Just as I was ready to nod off, Pat seduces the newshound, and while he's grinding away on top of her, she plunges two enormous kitchen knives into

his back! Yow! The highlight of the entire movie, it suddenly transforms into a bloodthirsty psycho-nympho flick, with Berg helping her out (in the name of L-O-V-E).

Nero is fine (as usual), but Powney (despite her continual lack of clothing) is a wash-out. Looking more like a BAYWATCH wannabee — with all of their acting talent, to boot — she's so unbelievable that it's difficult to buy into the movie's 'shocking' conceit. Still, the photography is pretty, the plot is convoluted enough to reassure reticent bishop-floggers that they're watching it for the plot thrills and *not* the sex, and Christopher Lee even turns up at the very end as a police investigator, working on a mysterious demise and hoping to figure out which obsessed cast member is to blame.

TARD SPASM: THE EXTENDED VERSION (Blackest Heart: 1990).

You can always depend on Blackest Heart Media to dig up the most unconscionable, anti-social, piss-your-pants-hilarious videos, and this is their latest treat. What exactly is a Tard Spasm, you cautiously ask? In this case, it's a handheld home-movie, taken at Children's Haven, a hospital for the mentally retarded, in Sarasota, Florida. The event is an Xmas-time concert, courtesy of a lame-ass punk band named Gobstopper, and this hour-long tape captures their entire gig -- from warm-up numbers, to a full-scale Tard Spasm, as these drool-challenged, uncoordinated patients shake to the loud, hardcore tunes. Yes, it's BEST BOY meets RUDE BOY, and if they weren't already low a chromosome, their dance-floor writhing probably kicked off a few loose ones.

Videotaped by the band, and now available for your derision, some of these slow-specta-

tors look like they're going to crap their pants, other mouth-breathers stare off into space, a wheelchaired woman flaps her arms, and a few dance as well as I do after a half-dozen shots of tequila. But the most important thing is that they all seem to *love* the off-key concert, since anything mildly rebellious is better than their institutionalized routine. In the middle of their set, complaints arise (from their party-pooping handlers) that the band should play some "good music." They also get some input from a volunteer vocalist who howls into the mike and looks like that kid from *LIFE GOES ON* (come to think of it, they *all* kinda look like that kid). Finally, some old biddy closes down the show since it's 9 o'clock (and probably time for their electroshock), accompanied by plenty of mono-syllabic praise from their happy audience, as they're being herded home.

Mind you, I'm sure the place is a fine facility, if you like being locked away from the rest of the world and treated like sheep. As for the so-called entertainers, these guys can't even play "Steppin' Stone", the easiest three-chord tune in history (which any garage band with all of their fingers can learn in ten minutes), but maybe that's why they're the perfect, barely-talented band to keep their barely-sentient audience amused. Undoubtedly, it's the most excited crowd they're ever going to get...Think you wife/girlfriend doesn't like you watching porno? Pop this baby into your VCR and she'll be packing her bags, even as you're rolling in a puddle of your own split beer with uncontrollable laughter.

A movie as American as Mom's apple pie, Daddy's Scotch-on-the-rocks and little Maxie's hang-ups.



Joseph E. Levine presents An Avco Embassy Film "The people next door"

starring
Eli Wallach · Julie Harris · Hal Holbrook · Deborah Winters

Screenplay by J.P. Miller based upon his original story. Produced by Herbert Brodwin. Directed by David Greene.
A Herbert Brodwin/J.P. Miller Production. Color by DeLuxe. AN AVCO EMBASSY RELEASE

RESTRICTED Under 17 requires
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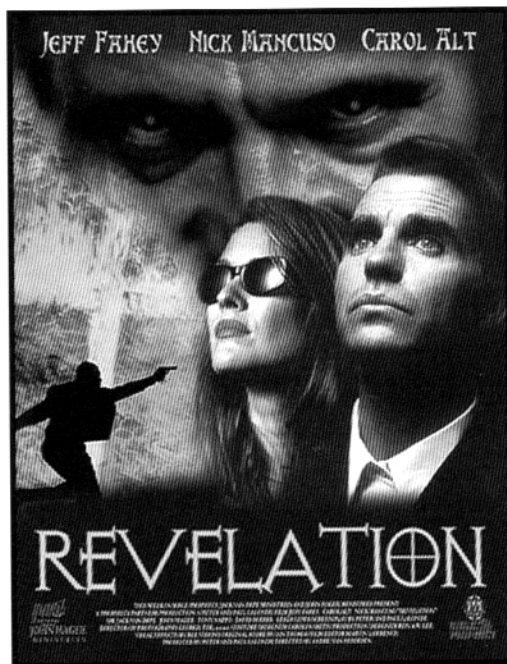
REVELATION (1999).

I love crackpot Christian propaganda films, from the fire-and-brimstone weirdness of the Ormonds to present-day religious rot-gut, since I not only find them hilariously misguided, but believe that one should 'keep their enemies closer.' The most recent outing from the (ultra-creepy) Jack Van Impe Ministries takes up where their last release, APOCALYPSE, left off — three months after the Rapture has swept the planet of all good Jesus-freaks. But this time around, director Andre Van Heerden actually hires a few recognizable actors; proving that their careers are officially dead, it stars Jeff Fahey, Carol Alt and Nick Mancuso.

In this post-Rapture scenario, Earth is in its Days of Tribulation and ruled by a self-proclaimed Messiah, Franco Macalouso (Mancuso, who's barely seen, to his credit). Meanwhile, Fahey stars as Thorold Stone, who's still earthbound since he was unable to "open his heart" to God, and is now a cynical "One Nation Earth" cop who tracks down "Haters" (who don't buy into this makeshift messiah, and continually listen to leftover Van Impe videos). Of course, Macalouso's army are typical atheists, who abuse children and beat prisoners in hopes they'll renounce God. Slowly realizing that this so-called Resistance is being set-up and sinister supernatural forces are at work, Stone finally rebels, armed with a top-secret CD that proves Macalouso's much-promoted "Day of Wonders" is actually a way to trap the remains of human civilization in a Virtual Reality Hell.

Filed on a reported \$5 million budget, Fahey (who looks and acts like the second coming of Jeff Conaway) is a bland hero; Carol Alt plays a blind-babe Bible-thumper, who initially seems like simple eye-candy, but eventually takes a few sneaky turns; and Mancuso finally turns up during the VR-sequences, as this Satanic cumbucket. Amongst the supporting cast, APOCALYPSE-starlet Leigh Lewis is thrown a bone as a rebel.

I usually laugh at these holier-than-thou films, but the scariest thing about REVELATION is that it's actually a well-constructed thriller, which disguises its Christian agenda under a B-movie scenario (with its stars only helping validate this slop). Hauling the Apocalypse into a new, high-tech age, it moves along at a fair clip and has several ingenious plot twists, even though their tiresome lectures about the validity of God keep us perpetually annoyed. Leaving itself open for yet another follow-up, we can look forward to APOCALYPSE III: TRIBULATION, which is currently in pre-production starring the brain-scrambled Gary Bussey(!).



humankind are suffering through various plagues, such as having fake boils glued onto their faces.

The film's rare moments of cut-rate action are intercut with tedious sequences of David and Connie deciphering some idiotic secret code — which is almost as excruciating as its endless godspiel about that highly-overrated Jesus dude. Lacking the inept innocence of the earlier installments, that's mostly due to numbingly dull Wellman Jr., who saps every scene of its camp potential. In long-running supporting roles, executive producer Russell S. Doughton Jr. is a Reverend turned scruffy survivalist, while Thom Rachford plays evil-betrayer Jerry for the fourth time! Even the long-awaited Battle of Armageddon is a stock-footage letdown, which makes you wonder why God didn't bless them with a less pitiful budget.

JOEL-PETER WITKIN: L'IMAGE INDÉLÉBILE (Shocking Videos; 1996).

What better way to kick off a documentary on controversial artist Joel-Peter Witkin, than with a clip of Senate-fossil Jesse Helms incensed about Witkin's grant from the National Endowment of the Arts for his "cadaver art" photography? Directed by Jérôme de Missolz, this fascinating 54-minute portrait of this unique genius takes the audience on a globe-hopping journey, as Witkin shows off past pics, explains his one-of-a-kind vision, and allows us to watch him at work.

At his Albuquerque, New Mexico home, Witkin shows off his earliest photographs and offers a little background info on each. He then selects a fresh horse head and demonstrates how to 'sculpt' the flesh from its bones. Traveling to Brazil and then Budapest, he's seen purchasing animal carcasses in a marketplace, hiring a prostitute and a street cripple to pose, and even tries to convince a middle-aged woman to doff her clothes for his photo — but she's a stubborn dame, and refuses. Witkin also offers insight into his gorgeously eerie images, such as "The Kiss" (which positions the two halves of a sectioned cadaver's head into a lip lock), "Unsanto Oscuro" (featuring a thalidomide victim as an armless, earless Saint), and "Feast of Fools" (a still-life of various body parts, which he accidentally discovered at a morgue).

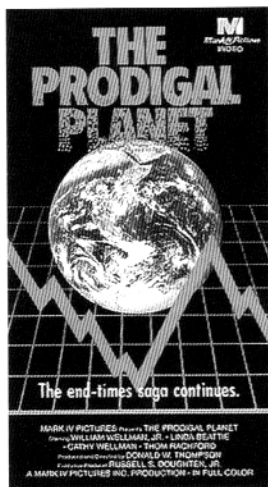
For fans, this is an essential profile, which makes us privy to the step-by-step evolution of one of his photographs — from initial sketches, locating his subjects, composing his 'living sculpture', right down to manipulating, scratching and razoring the negative. There's even a failed photo session, when the elements never gel properly. No simple shock-artist, Witkin transforms normally-discarded flesh (both alive and dead) into works of unsettling beauty, while the man himself is shown to be an articulate, meticulous artist, never consciously exploiting his material. Witkin, his work, as well as this film, are both fascinating and inspiring.

WHEN, JENNY? WHEN? (1978).

It's always refreshing to uncover some weird, embarrassing effort by a slumping TV-icon. In this instance, we've got everyone's favorite BRADY BUNCH jailbait, Maureen McCormick, in a half-hour high school melodrama, originally aired as an episode of the religious-show INSIGHT. Although it initially sounds like prime material, since McCormick plays a school slut, the end result is as leaden as an AfterSchool Special, and twice as moralistic.

Playing the title character Jenny, McCormick is the school's round-heeled hussy, who's hit on by every horny teen, from heavily-permed jock Jeff East to her girlfriend's beau. Only her guidance counselor (Olivia Cole) knows the truth — that Jenny actually hates herself and is "alone and afraid." Meanwhile, puppy-eyed Clark Brandon co-stars as the shy student who secretly likes her (as a person, mind you, not as a nympho), but since he's a nice-guy virgin, he's also labeled a "queer." Unless Brandon nails a girl, he jeopardizes his chance of becoming Captain of the macho football team, but his teammates help him out by setting him up on a blind-rape... er, date...with Brandon never suspecting that his secret heartthrob is the planned victim. But don't sweat it, puritans, because nothing happens, except for scattered laughs as Jenny confronts her own fears.

So what have we learned today, kids? The neighborhood teen-whore is worth redemption, principled guys will eventually win out, and if you actually buy into any of this slop, you're going to be sorely disappointed in real life. Despite her deep dilemma, McCormick displays the depth of a lobotomy out-patient, and in every frame, it's obvious this was a "my-fridge-is-empty" gig. Saddest of all, this dreck was directed by Ted Post, an unsung king of hard-boiled films like MAGNUM FORCE, HANG 'EM HIGH and GO TELL THE SPARTANS. I guess Maureen wasn't the only one who had trouble paying the rent that month.



THE PRODIGAL PLANET (J4HI; 1983).

In the previous issue, I reviewed the first three films (A THIEF IN THE NIGHT, A DISTANT THUNDER, IMAGE OF THE BEAST) of a 4-part, Christian propaganda epic from low-based Mark IV Pictures. Set before, during and after the Rapture, they proved that this Fundamentalist cataclysm is almost as ridiculous as L. Ron Hubbard's alien-overlord-based religious ravings. This is the tale's post-apocalyptic finale, but unlike the earlier, mercifully brief entries, series-director Donald W. Thompson was so deluded that he let it run 127 laborious minutes! Ouch!

The film follows a handful of survivors, long after the Rapture whisked all of God's ass-kissers to Heaven, and left the rest of us with a false savior and a nuke-ravaged world. William Wellman Jr. again stars as God-loving rebel David Michaels, who escapes from prison

thanks to pretty double-agent Connie (Cathy Wellman). You see, the "Believers" underground needs his scientific savvy to help destroy the satanic government's communications network. Stealing an all-purpose, military "war wagon", Connie and David begin a DAMNATION ALLEY-like quest to locate the rebel's cave/HQ. Let's not forget about the laughable "Doomsday People" who are suffering from the "wrath of god" (i.e. radiation) and look like monk-robed THE OMEGA MAN rejects. Picking up passengers along the way (including a whiny mom & teen-daughter duo, plus a spotty-faced mutant boy, Jimmy), they travel through decimated cities (represented by a medical skeleton laying in the middle of the street), even as enemy forces are on their tail. In the meantime, the remnants of

GROUPIES (Shocking Videos; 1970).

This hippie-era 16mm documentary poses the earth-shaking question, why do rock groupies screw who they screw? After watching this rambling artifact, the answer is simple: These women are too dumb and vapid to do anything else in life but spread their thighs as fame-whores, and desperately need this pathetic lifestyle in order to establish an identity. Thankfully, directors Ron Dorfman and Peter Nevard keep it all casual, without any heavy moralizing, as they follow these celebrity cum-receptacles through their nightly routine.

Shot over nine months, at such legendary watering holes as the Fillmore (East & West), LA's Whiskey-a-Go-Go and Detroit's Grand Ballroom, we meet the ultimate groupies, whose only ambition is to "fuck the prettiest boys," "smoke the best dope," and "meet the most far-out people." We watch them plan out their upcoming seductees (in this case, The Stooges), primp and preen, tour the clubs, and if things go right, "go back to a motel and ball." Ah, to be a rock musician and have stoned, uneducated, barely-attractive women hanging on your crotch!

In addition, these groupies show off their more intellectual side, by discussing which musicians are hardest to nail (I'd bet Liberace tops that list). We also meet the "Plaster Casters", who immortalize their conquests' genitals in plaster; while in a legitimately engaging sideline, we meet San Francisco's Queer Groupies, who pathetically lust after on-stage boytoys. Infinitely more interesting than any of the groupies' puddle-deep insights, the filmmakers capture live-performances by 10 Years After, Spooky Tooth, and Joe Cocker and the Grease Band (with spasming Joe providing much-needed relief from this self-indulgent scenario).

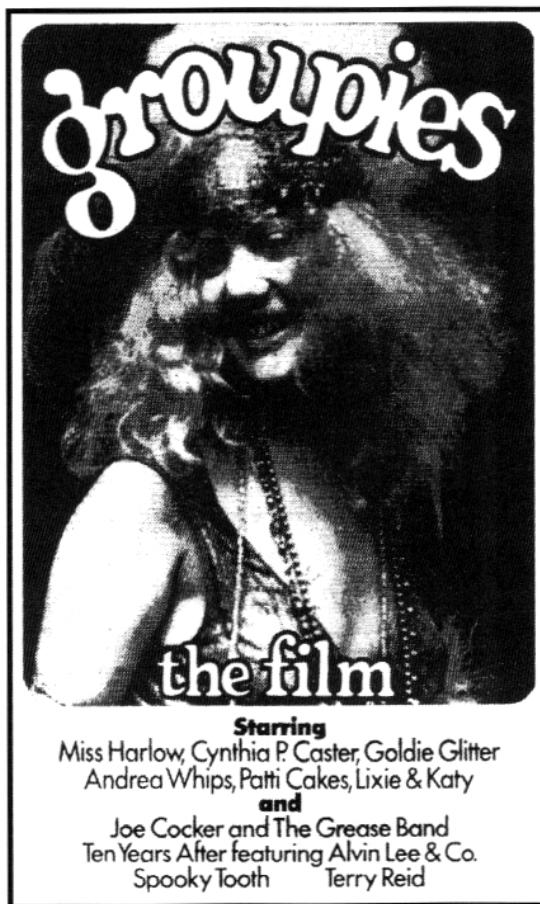
Laced with casual nudity, this slice of '60s nightlife embraces one of the more pathetic elements from that era, since most of the subjects can barely complete a sentence and often look like crack-whores in training. A hazy portrait of dim-witted sexual parasites, who're all too happy to boast of weaseling their way backstage and offering themselves to their heroes, you can't help but wonder where they are now. If they haven't OD'ed (or died from some unpleasant sexual disease), they're probably married in the suburbs, praying that this embarrassing flick will never resurface.

RETENEZ-MOI...OU JE FAIS UN MALHEUR! [Hold Me Back or I'll Have an Accident] (1984).

It's always fun to stumble across some obscure item from Jerry Lewis' career, even though most of them are pretty rotten. Never released in the US (for good reason), this is the first of two films that Jerry made in ever-adoring France. He stars, but this time leaves the directing duties to the workmanlike Michel Gérard, while this print was in French, without subtitles, with Jerry's dialogue dubbed and only his inimitable noises left intact.

Lewis stars as Jerry Logan, a Las Vegas policeman who arrives in France for a typically-klutzy vacation. Visiting his ex-wife, who's now married to a diminutive, balding French cop (Michel Blanc), the two men quickly butt heads. Lewis plays practical jokes on Blanc, who's not amused by his antics or Jerry's sweet-talking to his former wife (Charlotte de Turckheim). In other words, his character is basically an asshole (which isn't a stretch for the guy). The plot (yes, it's a Jerry Lewis flick with a *plot!*) involves an upper-crust gang of art smugglers, with undercover Blanc on the case, nosy Lewis getting involved, and Jer ultimately creating his usual brand of chaos in the middle of an opera.

What's the level of the comedy? How about Jerry flipping an omelet into the air, and it *doesn't come down* -- until a minute later, when it conveniently lands on Blanc's head! Now *that's* a fresh gag (if this was 1920, that is). Meanwhile, Lewis looks rather out-of-shape, so his physical schtick is limited, with Blanc gamely taking up the slack. Sure, Jerry's taken hostage and stuffed into a hide-away bed by thugs, but anything excessive is in long-shot, with an obvious idiot-double. At least it's bookended with amusing bits, from animated opening credits of Jerry flying to France in a tiny plane, to a closing array of out-takes. While not as grating as his second Gallic outing, *HOW DID YOU GET IN? WE DIDN'T SEE YOU LEAVE* (reviewed in SC#11), it's also less hysterically deranged. Personally, I always prefer the later when it comes to Lewis' antics.

**TEENAGER (J4HI; 1974).**

I have a fondness for movies about movie-making, as well as '70s biker flicks, and this weird, badly-titled no-budgeter covers both genres in one swoop. Directed by Gerald Seth Sindell (auteur behind the old cable sexploitation fave, *H.O.T.S.*), it follows an obsessive director whose dream project is a biker movie so believable that it's difficult to know where fiction ends, and reality begins.

Joe Warfield stars as driven young Billy Hazelrod, whose last effort was a "New Wave far-out film" that was part Fellini, part *THE TRIP*, and part film school masturbatory-slop. On the verge of a (self-proclaimed) breakthrough, his new project is a violent, improvisational biker flick, for which he dresses his amateur actors up as road-scum, takes them and his minimalist crew to a rural shithole, and without informing the populace, uses it as the backdrop for his grimy epic. In the process, a 16-year-old local girl is swept up by these sophisticated City Folk, and is soon swapping more-than-spit with one of the actors.

Manipulating his actors and pissing off the unsuspecting residents, the cast occasionally loses their grasp on reality and causes actual vandalism and violence, which is then written into the script (e.g. when Billy stages a rape scene in the church, the locals beat the piss out of 'em, and it all becomes an extremely-realistic subplot). But when an accidental murder occurs on-camera, the actors realize they might've taken their craft too far — even as Billy's only thought is to get a good shot of the body. Hey, it's all in the name of Art!

Although this provides little insight on how low-budget films are actually made — simply using the idea as a springboard — the script puts a likeably pretentious spin on its exploitative concept. Warfield makes a believable, self-destructive dickhead, while the only recognizable co-star is 1966 Playboy Playmate Sue Bernard as Billy's lead actress, who gets lost in her biker-babe, psycho-bitch role (in a big change from her passive supporting victim turn in *FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!*). Smarter and stranger than you'd initially expect, this is a solid concept, held back by some mediocre performances and a distinct lack of a budget.

BILLY THE KID AND THE GREEN BAIZE VAMPIRE (VSOM; 1985).

I've been a longtime fan of the late UK director Alan Clarke, even though many of his works are impossible to find in the US. Responsible for scalding dramas such as *MADE IN BRITAIN* (with Tim Roth), *THE FIRM* (with Gary Oldman) and *SCUM*, this particular feature is one of his oddest concoctions. Despite its title, it's not a western or a horror flick. Instead, this is a snooker-based musical, set against a patently artificial, studio-backdrop. Think of it as Alan Clarke's *ONE FROM THE HEART*, but in this case, it kinda works.

Phil Daniels (*QUADROPHENIA*) stars as Billy, a rebellious snooker hotshot, while Alun Armstrong is the long-reigning champ, the Green Baize Vampire. Instead of being a real bloodsucker though, he's a commercial-pitchman named Maxi (who dresses up like a vampire on TV). A nine-time champ who considers snooker a gentleman's game, and Billy a "moronic misfit," the two are manipulated into a grudge match thanks to a scheming female reporter and Billy's manager/friend (Bruce Payne, who's deep into the local mob).

The beginning of the film is slow-going, but it picks up immeasurably as the Big Showdown approaches and they train for the match (accompanied by the title tune). With Billy and Maxi agreeing that the loser will *never* play again, this tournament boils down to a generational-cultural clash, with the rebellious Kid vs. the pale old war-horse. The final half-hour consists of these 17 frames of snooker, complete with incredible swooping camerawork and a chorus of mezzanine spectators, that pits Billy's rowdy fans against Maxi's snobby, upper crust backers.

All of this is as spectacularly silly as it sounds, but the cast performs enthusiastically, and while the musical numbers are nothing memorable, they drive along the plot and illuminate the characters. Written by Trevor Preston (who also penned the lyrics), this isn't a great film, but I've got to give Clarke & Co. credit for attempting something so courageously outrageous, and proving that Ken Russell isn't the only Brit filmmaker who can crank out a hallucinogenic, head-scratching musical.

INTREPIDOS PUNKS [Fearless Bitches] (198-?).

What can you possibly say about a Mexican, no-budget flick that begins with a group of nuns robbing a bank with automatic weapons, then escaping with the help of punk-mohawked bikers? Well, I'd say that this is one of the most lovably idiotic Girl Gang flicks since SWITCHBLADE SISTERS. I only wish the print had subtitles, so I could do spit takes at the undoubtedly terrible dialogue.

Directed by Francisco Guerrero, this unapologetically crude, sexy and violent bikerama throws aside all coherence in order to revel in cheap thrills, laughable "punk" make-up, souped-up choppers, and biker chicks who dress more like she-male strippers from some low-rent, New Jersey bar. Piling one berserk or salacious moment on top of another, we get the huge-haired biker-babe leader (and her WalMart breast implants) dressing down for a conjugal visit with her jailed squeeze; there's a desert rumble with some blue-collar workers; and when the male and female bikers rape a bunch of middle-aged housewives, they also perform the background music on their handy instruments and drum kit!

Their misadventures mesh the macho-vener of late-'60s US biker movies with a futuristic violence that proves these filmmakers have watched THE ROAD WARRIOR one too many times. There are also raunchy sex scenes which are less titillating than gloriously embarrassing to all involved. In addition to the male "punks," who are middle-aged guys with streaked hair and studded Stonewall-attire, we've got a south-of-the-border Starsky and Hutch who dress like Tony Manero-clones, but have physiques more akin to Pavarotti. Eventually, the bikers become the prey when hitmen invade their wilderness encampment.

Starring Juan Gallardo, Ana Luisa Peluto and Martha Elena Cervantes, this is low-grade, high-energy Mexploitation that isn't afraid to look like crap, just so long as it's blatantly anti-social. It embraces any excuse to blow away a character (during imply-choreographed carnage), offend one's fashion sense, or play that incessant theme song one more time. No question, it's best appreciated after downing more beers than you fit in one fridge.



MAID IN SWEDEN (Luminous; 1969) and RÖTMÄNAD [a/k/a What Are You Doing After the Orgy?] (Shocking Videos; 1970).

Best known for her sexy 'n' sadistic roles in THEY CALL HER ONE EYE and Joe Sarno's YOUNG PLAYTHINGS, Christina Lindberg was unquestionably one of the hottest young starlets of the EuroSex genre, so here's a double dose of her fresh-faced, hot-bodied charms, in two of her earliest gigs.

First up is MAID IN SWEDEN, which had a decent release in the US, courtesy of the Cannon Group. Filmed in English (and from the sound of it, most of the cast did it phonetically), the concept is nothing new. 19-year-old Lindberg is rural schoolgirl Inga, who visits her older, worldly sister Greta (Monika Ekman) and boyfriend Casten (Krister Ekman) in swinging Stockholm. Once there, naive li'l sis has her eyes opened to the wonderful world of sex 'n' drugs, as Inga's dreams are filled with erotic scenarios. For further instruction on intercourse, she plays voyeur on big sis and boyfriend, which has Inga masturbating in bed.

Slipping into a sexy, low-cut dress, Greta & Casten set her up on a date, where she winds up raped. But just as it *always* happens between date-rapists and their victims, she begins to enjoy the ride, and soon romance blooms, as this virgin turns instant nympho. A twisted male fantasy? No question! Misogynistic? Absolutely! The elements for an effective sex-pic? Hey, that's why I'm reviewing it, folks. Finally, it's capped off with cheap melodrama as Inga unwillingly comes between Greta and her uncontrollably-horny squeeze.

Directed by Floch Johnson (a/k/a Dan Wolman) and produced by Ami Arzi (who later backed grindhouse fare like the WIP-flick PURGATORY), the worst thing about the movie is its generic pop tunes, composed for maximum relevance (with titles like "First Taste of Love" and "You're No Longer a Child"). First and foremost, it's a showcase for Lindberg's allure, as she makes love, takes a slo-mo shower and repeatedly changes her clothes, as we leer at her fabulous rack. In case you wondered, despite its title, there's no "maid" in the entire movie.

Lindberg received 3rd billing in RÖTMÄNAD, a more eccentric sex-outing, mixed with black comedy. Directed by Jan Halldoff, this print was in Swedish, without subtitles, but I still caught the gist of the plot. Set in rural Sweden, Karl-Gustaf Lindstedt (who starred in Bo Widerberg's MAN ON THE ROOF) is Assar, a lonely, middle-aged gent whose doe-eyed daughter Annabella (Lindberg) roams about in public with her blouse unbuttoned. But their simple lifestyle ends when runaway-wife Sally (Ulla Sjöblom) storms back into his life and turns the backyard boathouse into her whorehouse — brazenly introducing her johns to her abandoned hubbie and even inviting home a pack of sailors!

As for Christina, she's definitely hot, and that's never more obvious than when a local photographer tags her as model-material, and has Lindberg over-exposing her ample assets for some nude shoots. Experienced Sally also gives Annabella lessons in the fine art of seduction, including how to correct her bad posture (of course, with Lindberg's breasts, it's understandable why she'd stoop). Throughout, Christina has little to do but look sexy, which is no trouble whatsoever, particularly after meeting a dreamy potential boyfriend — whose arrival leads to the film's darker directions.

With the plot shifting toward cold-blooded murder, our increasingly-pissed papa decides to end his problems by killing Sally, which leads to some unexpectedly cruel plot twists. As for Lindberg, this stacked Swedish minx sports the most outrageous funeral dress in recent memory, learns the art of sexual empowerment, and keeps the viewers drooling. Difficult to fully understand, due to the language barrier, this outing is a solid example of Europe's willingness to take the exploitation genre into dicier directions.



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BROTHER THEODORE SPEAKS (1997).

Brother Theodore has been a NYC institution for decades, thanks to his legendary one-man shows, as well as numerous appearances on David Letterman in the '80s. Known to mainstream filmgoers for his eccentric role in THE BURBS, and cinema-deviants for his appearance in the X-rated JAWS-parody, GUMS, he began his theatrical rants in the '50s and was dubbed "Brother" by Merv Griffin (who had him on his talk show 36 times). Well, I first saw this crazed philosopher's live act when I was in college, nearly 20 years ago, and have loved him ever since. Even back then, Theodore was ancient, so it's a near-miracle that now, in his early-nineties(!), this raving curmudgeon is still waging his disorienting on-stage diatribes. It's also wonderful to see his long-running performance captured on film in this 57-minute work, before the old geezer croaks and leaves behind nothing but stoned memories of his deranged, midnight sermons.

Directed by E.J. Vaughn and Tom McDonough, this is a simple set-up — a table, a chair, a black backdrop, and Theodore. White-haired, wild-eyed and ever-grumpy, he performs his comedic routine to an unseen audience; often telling the exact same quips and observations that he did 20 years ago (which, in addition to a pleasant memory-jogger, proves that Theodore doesn't believe in keeping his material fresh). Tackling topics such as doom, decay, death, heaven, food, rats, and God ("We're puppets in the hands of an insane puppeteer."), this is an apocalyptic rant, full of solemn insights and dark absurdity, with Theodore often speaking directly to his "small, but utterly repulsive audience" (such as when he hilariously hits on — and instantly spurns — a female spectator).

Admittedly, this film won't win over many newcomers, since Theodore often comes off like that crazy, drunk Uncle who corners you at family gatherings. But hardcore fans of Theodore's will cherish this professionally-lensed monologue, which captures his act for posterity, even if it lacks his live energy (as well as the seediness of some of those theatres). Personally, I would've preferred a feature-length endeavor, mixing some off-stage insight along with his act — which would've made it more enlightening to fans and accessible to outsiders. Still, this is what we've got, and it's a weird, wonderful treasure. A dose of coordinated madness which has been filling seats for longer than I've been alive, it proves that Brother Theodore is truly the Java Man of today's Performance Art.

SATURDAYS AT MIDNIGHT

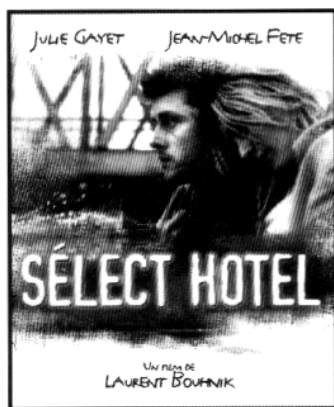
THEODORE

a maniacal messiah
brilliant outrageous
humorist
Charles Marowitz
Village Voice, N.Y.

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**SÉLECT HOTEL (ETC; 1996).**

Enter the world of a French flophouse and its array of residents, including junkies, prostitutes, cross-dressers, panhandlers, and assorted lowlifes. Written and directed by Laurent Bouhnik, this Bukowski-esque drama of drugs, sex, and society's detritus doesn't offer many new insights, but accomplishes its sleazy agenda with a welcome (and often brutal) honesty.

The script's primary focus is on top-billed Julie Gayet as Nat, a young crackwhore who's unable to pay her overdue rent, is beaten up and robbed of her night's blowjob money, and has a pimp who sets her up with gigs like a sadist who performs nebulous gynecological experiments while she's in stirrups. Meanwhile, her hotheaded brother Toif (Jean-Michel Fete) isn't the brightest kid on the block, particularly when he uses a stolen gun to rob a nearby shoe store, but never notices that big ol' security camera hanging in plain view. After this robbery, the humiliated store owner -- a seemingly-ordinary, family-man -- becomes obsessed with tracking down the thieving punk, soon begins following Nat on her round-headed route, and ultimately beds her instead.

These are seedy, unlikeable folks, and luckily, they're all believable played by its cast. The stand-out is Gayet, who's obviously a pretty blonde in real life, but courageously allows herself to look like she's been hit one too many times with the Burnt-Out Stick. Nicely lensed, the storyline might lack narrative thrust, but makes up for it in sordid digressions, while Bouhnik wisely keeps it under 85 minutes. Overflowing with self-destructive stupidity, nudity, and (most of all) tragedy, you'll find no happy endings in this caustic scenario.

MADAME WANG'S (1981).

Director Paul Morrissey is responsible for several fascinating, low-life dramas, in both his Warhol outings (HEAT, WOMEN IN REVOLT) and later, slightly-tighter-scripted works (MIXED BLOOD, FORTY DEUCE). Although this is one of his minor efforts, it deserves a mention, since it follows the same no-budget, streetwise tradition as his other fare. Tackling the sunny sleaziness of California, it lacks the edginess of his NYC work, but is still chock full of casual deviance, cross-dressers, fruits, and a hunky male star. It's no big surprise that the film was barely released (in NYC, it took 15 years!).

For this absurd, fish-out-of-water comedy, Patrick Schoene stars as Lutz, a studly East German agent who washes up in Long Beach, California. While assimilating with the city's beach-side oddballs, he encounters Christina Indri as a friendly whore who offers the barefoot stranger a place to crash, in the nearby Temple of Dance Arts. Soon, he's the driver for the Temple's Divine-wannabee (Jimmy Madaus) and her loathsome little boy, who's continually stuffing fast food into his puffy face. Plus there's Indri's overwrought queer pimp (William Edgar), whose hobby involves door-knob theft and sniffing.

Lutz soon becomes the world's most apathetic pimp, is hired by a professional party giver (Susan Blond) to be "street trash" at a trendy shindig (hauling him and his pals there in an open U-Haul), and finally catches the eye of Madame Wang (Virginia Bruce), the owner of LA's preeminent punk-rock Chinese restaurant. But Lutz mustn't forget about his official assignment, which is to link up with Americans who are anti-democracy -- like Jane Fonda (which leads to one of the most amusing sequences).

Full of oversized, Warhol-wannabee characters, WANG'S rambles along without much rhyme or reason, and only fitfully exposes the stupidity of American culture. At the center of it all, blasé Schoene continually lounges about shirtless. A pretty boy, who's also pretty dull, he makes Dallesandro look like a Strasberg graduate, despite indulging in a bit of self-mutilation. Alas, the end result resembles John Waters-Lite. Its supposedly-outrageous humor hasn't aged very well, and while the cast of weirdos were, once upon a time, only found in underground cinema, they now populate most daytime talk shows.

BLOODBATH [a.k.a. The Sky is Falling] (J4HI; 1977).

I've covered a shitload of Dennis Hopper flicks in SHOCK CINEMA, from his earliest, druggiest endeavors to his '90s sell-out throwaways, but this half-baked European production somehow slipped through the cracks. Directed by Silvio Narizzano (whose career has careened from GEORGY GIRL, to the sadistic REDNECK, to this brain-burnt sleaze), it co-stars long-past-her-BABYDOLL-allure Carroll Baker, but finds its biggest kicks thanks to an obviously pre-detox Hopper and his hilariously excessive moments.

Set in a small Mexican village, Hopper plays a long-haired, extremely-sweaty American, who looks like he's going to O.D. at any moment as he runs through the streets, crazed from cut-rate hallucinations and black-outs. Meanwhile, Baker plays a once-famous casting-couch-actress, Treasure Evans, who finds Hopper half-dead on the beach and hauls him home. Try as I might, I couldn't locate even the vaguest plot, outside of its disjointed portrait of Ugly Americans, who treat everyone like scum and are impossible to care about.

Against this south-of-the-border backdrop, Hopper falls for a naked chick, Baker (who pretends she's still a Hollywood player) bangs a muscular local lad, and they hang out with other expatriates (including Richard Todd, and an aging, comic-relief "fag" played by scriptwriter Win Wells). Eventually, Hopper shoots up, struggles with an old trauma, and laughably comes to terms with his dementia, while the leads all get their (often grim) comeuppance.

Sounds confusing, you say? Just try watching the film for yourself, and you'll know how I felt. One of the more casually incoherent flicks I've seen in awhile, Dennis is totally believable as an inarticulate, stoned degenerate (unfortunately, so is Baker as a washed-up starlet) and a Hopper-highlight has him calling a black woman a "piccaninny" and making her sing "Shortenin' Bread." At times you get the feeling Hopper forgot there was a camera rolling, and I'd wager he doesn't even remember cashing this paycheck. Still, it's his wacky presence that makes this cinematic diarrhea as watchable as it is.

HE IS MY BROTHER (J4HI; 1975).

Best known for directing classics such as THE CAINE MUTINY and THE YOUNG LIONS, Edward Dmytryk passed away this summer, at the ripe old age of 90. So, in honor of this legendary filmmaker, what do we do at SHOCK CINEMA? We review one of his final, most embarrassing pieces of shit, of course! Thoroughly misguided, this is a family-friendly period piece set in a Hawaiian Leper Colony, starring one-time singing-stud Bobby Sherman and mopheaded child-annoyance Robbie Rist (THE BRADY BUNCH's Cousin Oliver).

Insufferably self-righteous, the film begins with a brief history of Leprosy, after which we meet Keenan Wynn as Leper Island humanitarian Brother Dalton.

As if his problems with a local magician named "The Kahuna" weren't trying enough, he has to deal with HERE COME THE BRIDES alumnus Sherman and mini-John Denver-clone Rist, as two shipwrecked brothers. Little Randy (Rist) has amnesia from the loss of their parents to sharks, while Sherman (as the hotheaded Jeff) freaks out when he sees he's in the middle of Lepertown. But one Hawaiian luau later, after a few stiff drinks, he falls for the first native chick to give him a cheap necklace, and also pisses off the cranky Kahuna.

Their pathetic misadventures continue as Randy gets lost in the wilderness, the two miss their boat home, "immature brat" Jeff softens up (building a makeshift swing-set for the Leper Kids), and Randy is almost sacrificed to a volcano god. Less gripping than an episode of GILLIGAN'S ISLAND, the film's biggest unintentional laugh is when The Kahuna proves his "magic" with the use of a home-made hang glider -- which Rist takes for a spin. No surprise, the White Man will inevitably save these ignorant natives, because *that's* the American way!

Scripted by David Pritchard (who also plays a secondary island priest), all of this is repellantly inspirational, from its swelling music, to uplifting Christian dialogue, to so-cute-you-want-to-kick-'em children. When it isn't painful, it's dull, with long stretches of fishing, sightseeing and chaste romance. The acting (and sad to report, the directing) is on the level of a Driver's Ed film, while the filmmakers hoped that Rist (who, at 35, is now the lead singer of the indie band WONDERBOY) was so cute that you wouldn't notice his character was nearly retarded. On the (lone) positive side, the island photography doesn't suck.

They were strangers on a strange island ...
TRYING TO SURVIVE SUPERNATURAL POWERS THEY COULDN'T EXPLAIN



Cinema Financial of America presents
a James Polakoff film

HE IS MY BROTHER

STARRING BOBBY SHERMAN & KEENAN WYNN
CO-STARRING ROBBIE RIST, JOAQUIN MARTINEZ, BENSON FONG
AND INTRODUCING KATHY PAULO

PG PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED

COLOR BY MGM

CHANDLER (1971).

Warren Oates was, unquestionably, one of our most under appreciated actors, with knock-out roles in cult oddities such as *COCKFIGHTER* and *92 IN THE SHADE*. Stealing the show in just about every film he stuck his face into, this seedy, modern-day detective flick provided Oates with one of his earliest starring gigs; but don't get your hopes up too soon. Although it's a well-mounted, widescreen MGM production, it also has all of the depth of an episode of *MATLOCK*.

Warren stars as down-on-his-luck private eye Chandler, who has cynicism to spare, as well as a liver the size of a dead cat. But now, a big case has suddenly fallen into his lap, forcing this self-described "relic" to get his .38 Smith & Wesson out of hock. His job is to tail co-star Leslie Caron (who still looks hot at 40) as Katherine, a government witness with info about a mobster. Still, Chandler (who's referred to by others as "monkey-face") isn't the brightest guy; along the way, he blows his cover by trying to flirt with Caron, and allows her to get kidnapped, almost from under his nose.

All of this convoluted nonsense ultimately involves a mysterious missing corpse, government deceptions, and rival crime bosses. Offering some supporting-role clues, there's Mitchell Ryan (Greg's father in *DHARMA AND GREG*), Gloria Grahame, Royal Dano, and Scatman Crothers as a restaurant lounge's piano player. As for the final, boring outcome, it has... er... shit, I only watched the movie ten minutes ago, and I can barely remember it.

Mind you, even though this sounds like solid casting for Oates, he sleepwalks through the tedium, in one of his least eccentric, "as long as the check clears" efforts. It's too bad that (the justifiably unknown) director Paul Magwood simply recycles all of the old detective clichés, without a bit of freshening. Though it starts out well (mostly due to Oates' natural charisma), the idiotic script doesn't know jackshit about how to map out a coherent mystery. Even at a scant 85 minutes, it's an endurance test.

STRANGLER VS. STRANGLER [Davitelj Protiv Davitelja] (VSOM; 1984).

In the US, we've gotten our share of Yugoslavian headlines recently, and if pressed to imagine the possibilities of that country's cinema, there's no way you'd come up with this warped delight. An instant cult item, it's a black-comic mix of the arthouse and the grindhouse, courtesy of director Slobodan Sijan. Packed with Troma-subtle plot twists and performances, it's all the more entertaining for its genre-splintering anarchy.

Set in Belgrade, the movie begins like an educational profile of their emergence as a "world class metropolis," thanks to their rising crime rate, which includes glimpses of botched bank robberies, elevator attacks, rape, and even a cemetery flasher. But the King Felon of them all is a serial killer known as "The Strangler" — a mother-obsessed, overweight carnation-salesman named Peter Merrick, who's far from the brightest bulb in the chandelier. In True Crime narrative fashion, the film reveals his accidental debut into homicide, after a woman throws his precious flowers onto the floor. From then on, any woman who doesn't respect his carnations will soon find his fingers around their pretty lil' necks.

In a separate storyline, a geeky, bespectacled rock-musician-wannabe, Spiro Hopkins, has a psychic link to this killer and writes a hit song ("Belgrade Strangler") based on the exploits. Complete with his band's hot new music video, Spiro is so connected to this fat fiend that he even tries to strangle a sexy female DJ on the air — who he then falls in love with, and begins stalking. Mixed with this musician's rise to fame (and emotional obsession) and Merrick's accidental murder spree (as well as giddy appreciation of his song's fame), there's also a dim police inspector in charge of the case, who goes insane from the pressure. As these threads converge, things get even darker and more outrageous, including a torn-off ear, cheap nudity, marriage, and a corpse-strewn finale.

More than just a melange of serial killer clichés, there's a genuinely quirky narrative style at work, with Sijan bringing a slap-happy absurdist vision to this murderous romp. It's also energized by our poor dim Merrick, who finally achieves some long-overdue empowerment, even though all of the people in his life will wind up dead at his feet. Starring Tasko Nacic, Srdjan Saper and Sonja Savic, it's a blissfully demented treat.

**ACID: DELIRIO DEI SENSI [a.k.a. LSD, \$5 Paradise] (Video Vortex; 1968).**

Though in Italian, with no subtitles, this film's trippy agenda is easy to decipher, since it opens with psychedelic visuals, kids getting stoned, and a guy slashing his own face up with a straight razor. Yes, it's an overseas Horrors-of-Hallucinogens expose, with all of the usual, overwrought results. Directed by Giuseppe Scotese, he hauls his crew to New York City and kicks off the flick with footage of Greenwich Village's bare-foot potheads. But rather than stick to these wacky real-life burn-outs, this turns into a leaden series of anti-drug vignettes featuring interchangeable actors.

At its best, the film visits far-out hippie hang-outs, as these kids close the curtains, light the candles and drop out (of their minds). But beware of those bad trips, particularly if your reaction is anything like the ones here. If you're lucky, you'll simply take a dip in a public fountain and get hauled away by the cops. Amongst the less-fortunate casualties, one mind-warped gal steps in front of a speeding car, while another takes a leap off the Queensboro bridge. For viewers who are too young to have experienced it first-hand, this shows you what an *honest-to-goodness* hippie party was like, right down to the naked gal covered in whipped cream and the band smashing their own instruments. Groovy.

Even when someone speaks English, it's overdubbed with Italian, including warnings by straight-laced doctors of LSD's dangers; while in one of its more unfathomable moments, the Mafia shows up to pour some concrete overshoes. Without question, the most lovable moments are during its freak-outs (and I would've appreciated them even more if I'd scored some acid before-

hand), complete with hazy double-and-triple vision, swirling cameras, kaleidoscopic visuals, and distorted lens, courtesy of cameraman Antonio Maccoppi. Despite these highlights, this is just as often a monotonous mess -- at its best when making us nostalgic for its Flower Power era or blasting our corneas with its images, only to drop us back to Earth during its insufferably flat drama.

SUPER XUXA CONTRA BAIXO ASTRAL (Shocking Videos; 1988).

If you don't know who Xuxa is, shame on you. This blonde, Brazilian superstar (full name: Xuxa Meneghel) was not only the hostess of one of the weirdest South American kid-shows in history, but actually admits to her early exploitation flick *LOVE, STRANGE, LOVE* (in which naked Xuxa seduces a 12-year-old boy). This feature-length eye-candy is her most insane outing, and despite its lack of subtitles, it's easier to follow than an episode of the *TELETUBBIES*. Essentially, a kid-oriented sci-fi flick, it's filtered through a tripped-out mentality, and stars a hot babe who dresses like one of the Laker Girls.

The moment hot-pants-clad Xuxa tools into town on her white-motorcycle (accompanied by her pathetic puppet-dog pet, who makes Lamb Chop look high-tech), her positive vibes have every toddler in town possessed by her charms, leading to a bile-producing musical number as they paint over ugly graffiti with rainbows. Meanwhile, deep under the city, an evil empire exists, with Guilherme Karam ripping loose as the *mui* sinister Baixo Astral, who sends his dime-store minions to kidnap her pup.

Of course, Xuxa must defeat these cheaply-dressed monsters by entering a fantasy-world of talking creatures and bizarre vistas (think *LABYRINTH*, but with a stolen puppet-dog in place of a brother). She also finds time to rescue and ride a pink dolphin during an undersea musical sequence, indulges in far too many talking-creatures and annoying songs (the exception being a number with Bird People who hang in the branches), and comes face-to-face with Baixo Astral, who hopes to seduce this heroic heartthrob over to his Dark Side.

Full of cheapjack costumes and mystical mumbo-jumbo, Xuxa dances with all of the style and grace of a Scores wannabe, as everyone within sniffing distance adores her — Xuxa's couch pillow even comes to life in order to snuggle her. Directed by Anna Penido, it's fast-paced enough to entertain kids, but is better suited to stoned adults who'll get off on Xuxa's leggy charms and the film's cut-rate surrealism. Overblown, outrageous, and occasionally obnoxious, this is *THE HOLY MOUNTAIN* of psychedelic kids flicks, and I only wish this type of fucked-up fare was around when I was an impressionable tot.

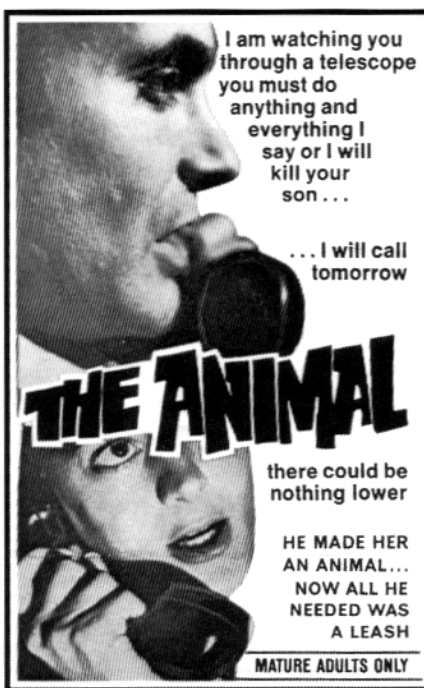
THE ANIMAL (Something Weird Video; 1968).

It's impossible to go wrong with a grindhouse flick that boasts director R. Lee Frost and scripter Bob Cresse, that fun-loving pair of cinematic sadists who gave us sicko gems like LOVE CAMP 7 and HOT SPUR. This once-lost, b&w flick is no exception. Recently unearthed by Something Weird Video, it's an incredible cinematic cesspool, which knows how to twist expectations, and helped set a standard that Deuce fare could rarely beat.

Kicking off with a near-hallucinogenic car-chase, our dying driver, Ted Andrews (David Holmes), reflects on his extremely-cool life as a pot-smoking degenerate, who spent his off-hours making obscene phone calls and screaming from raging headaches. He also uses a telescope for some gratuitous lesbian-petting. Ah, but the life of an 'animal' is fraught with hazards, as he tries out amyls (thanks to a cute prostitute) and is given some mind-blowing LSD. Let's not forget some penny-ante psychoanalysis of Ted's deviance, due to a domineering mother who turns him into an impotent basket-case with one simple phone call.

By day, Ted works as a lowly film-cutter, but at night, he's increasingly obsessed with a scantily-clad neighbor (Virginia Gordon, who also appeared in HOT SPUR) who he plays voyeur on. A loving mother who does exercises in front of her window in a see-thru leotard, he calls her up, threatens to throw acid into her child's face if she doesn't leave her drapes open and strip for him, and finally kidnaps her. Meanwhile, in a rare occurrence for this type of fare, Gordon makes an effort to actually act! As for Holmes, when he finally doses on acid, alone and frustrated, it's Freak-Out Time, kids! Suddenly, the film bursts into COLOR for the final reel, as out-of-control Ted flies off his already-tenuous rocker, and *needs* to be satisfied, no matter what! It's a perfect capper, with a great comeuppance.

Unlike a lot of '60s sleaze, Frost hires genuinely good-looking women, provides a believably seedy backdrop, and is willing to focus on a totally reprehensible lead character, who'll do anything to quench his urges. Cool! Lovably sordid, with several seriously foul plot twists, this isn't as physically abusive as some of the Findlay's "roughies", but is just as emotionally degrading and foul. THE



ANIMAL is an amazing find, which should be required viewing for all of today's sorry breed of all-too-generic sleaze-merchants.

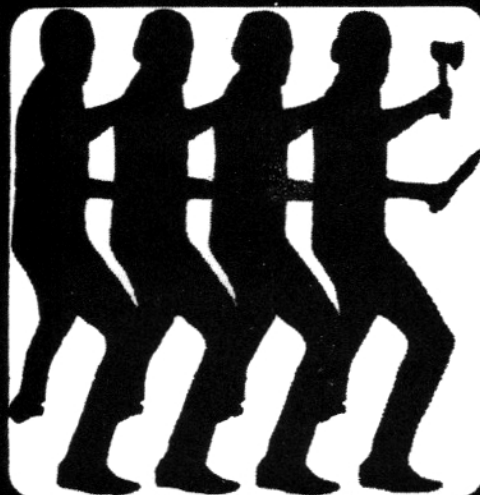
THE GIRLS OF THE VOLUPTUOUS HORROR OF KAREN BLACK (Gotham Gold; 1999).

Released in an oversized box, and looking like any standard porno, this 43-minute fetish tape is a sad endeavor indeed. For those out of the underground-music/performance-art loop, the band The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black has been a NYC institution for years, led by shock-diva Kembra Pfahler, and fueled by their raw, imaginative dementia. Unfortunately, this penny-ante sex-video proves how quickly on-stage charisma can turn into on-screen crapola.

This isn't your usual erotica, as notorious-cartoonist Mike Diana appears as himself, falls asleep over his artwork and has a discipline dream. This segues into a domineering Mistress overseeing Kembra and her body-painted trainees, and when they're not spanking each other (or nearly cracking up on-camera), their attempts at 'acting' are inept. Later, these naked ladies are lightly whipped, pile onto each other (a Pretentious Sandwich?), Kembra is burnt with candle wax, while Mike D. is seen pleasuring himself. Promising that this will become "one of the great cult films of the '90s," I guess the minimum-wage employee who wrote that copy never actually watched the video. Unimaginatively

shot, Pfahler is nude throughout, but it's definitely not arousing (unless you're a heroin-chic East Villager, who probably couldn't get it up anyhow).

I first caught a Karen Black performance back in '91, while on acid (and from the look of it, they were too). Nowadays, without the aid of said pharmaceuticals (but plenty of hard liquor), it's sad to see them in this slop. While it's nothing new for Kembra (who appeared in several decade-old fetish videos as "Mistress Kimbra"), they all deserve better than this fare, which is shot on one pathetic set. Occasionally offering a glimpse of their stage-work, this is, more often, a lame 'n' limp domination video, stitched together for some quick rent money. Hey, at least it tosses one of Karen Black's band-videos at the end, which is more colorful and energetic than anything else on the tape.

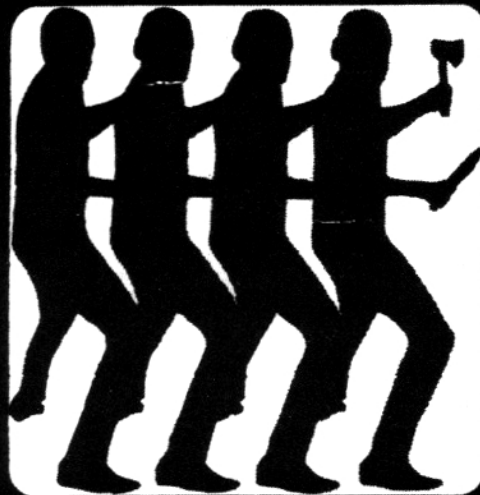


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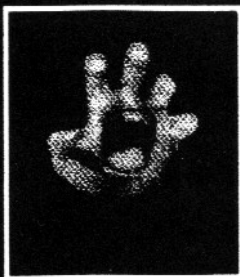
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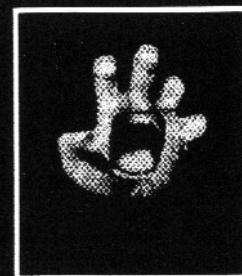


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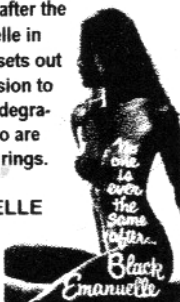
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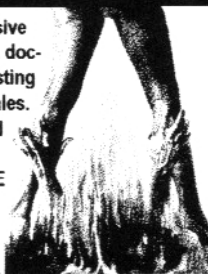
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BIG ZAPPER

off... she takes on a room of weapon-carrying guys, Kung-fu-ing, blasting and hacking them to death. She cuts off one villain's head and it falls into another's hands and is still talking. Beautiful letterboxed print.



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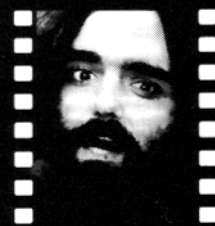
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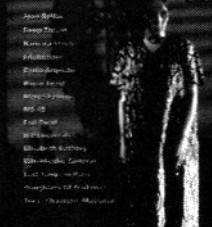
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SHOCK CINEMA TALKS TO CHARACTER ACTOR HUGH KEAYS-BYRNE

Interview by Michael Helms

You don't have to be an Oz film enthusiast to enjoy the work of British-born, Australian-based actor Hugh Keays-Byrne, but it might help. Still, you probably saw him, but heard someone else's voice, in the US version of *MAD MAX* (not pleasant says Keays-Byrne) where he supplied maximum menace as Toecutter, the leader of the gang that makes Max mad. Perhaps you caught him attempting to corral Rutger Hauer in *THE BLOOD OF HEROES* (another distasteful exercise according to the actor) or keel-hauling away in last year's cable-epic *MOBY DICK*? Have you never blown yourself 'sky high' while watching the '70s kung fu flick *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*? How about *STARSHIP* by STAR WARS set decorator Roger Christian? *STARSHIP* pits Hugh and an air rifle against really big trucks and aliens that look and sound like second hand cyber-men. Naturally it has great spaceships but...

Hugh Keays-Byrne in person has widescreen presence. Long hair, bearded, silver-gray. Kindly and avuncular. It wasn't hard to take any of the tales of indie cinema woe and joy that spilled out during his recent stay in Melbourne while shooting the cable epic *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*. Keays-Byrne plays McNiff. "A mercenary of the 1800s," says the actor. McNiff walks away well pleased, the commander and chief of a harem of nubile sycophants.

As an Australian teen growing up in the era of 70s pre-VCR TV (some of it black-and-white) I recall nothing like *COUNTDOWN* (the 6pm Sunday pop music show) or the mellifluous tones of Keays-Byrne to galvanize attention. It didn't really matter whether he was playing a good guy (rarely) or a bad guy, Keays-Byrne always played edgy characters with psychological depth (i.e. riddled with inner demons). Usually they were on the take. In short, he never failed to enliven any piece of drama he appeared in. He did lots of TV work in between features but what really put him on the celluloid highway was the severely underrated undercover cop biker drama *STONE*.

Sure, by 1974 we'd already had *WEREWOLVES ON WHEELS* and the bike genre had well and truly atrophied, but *STONE* was and is a necessary item, if only for Australian purposes. Recently the subject of a documentary by Richard Kuipers, *STONE* had a bike run for its 25th anniversary and over 100,000 participants turned up (a crash hospitalized 50 of them!). A cult film to be reckoned with if not viewed often.

Keays-Byrne's career has literally careened across the board(s). From British theatre to the out-back and beyond. He's worked for Werner Herzog (*WHERE THE GREEN ANTS DREAM*) and Antony I. Ginnane (the action-man of Australian exploitation cinema), thespied with Jimmy Wang Yu and Dennis Hopper, appeared in anti-nuke and post-nuke thrillers, and created his own future world drama *RESISTANCE*. One fine sunny, rainy, Melbourne day, we sat in the smoking section of a hotel cafe armed with cappuccinos. Questions flew.

SC: Could you tell us how you got into the business?

HKB: At 15 I didn't want an army career. All my people are in the army. My father and his father. I was sent to army junior school and kicked up. They said, "OK. Off you go." The father figure said, "Get a job." The actor up the road came down with a book of contacts. My father recognized a name in the book as a woman who had performed for the troops in Burma. So we had a meeting but she couldn't help. Her assistant mentioned that I might be able to get an audition with this children's theatre company. I passed and that kicked me off. I got work at 16 and just went from job to job. We're talking 1962, 63, with the English repertory system still in place. The Mermaid Theatre was run by Sir Bernard Miles. I managed to play some reasonably good parts early on because people dropped out. Then I went to the Royal Shakespeare Company and spent 6 years with them. That was a consolidating time. That brought me to Australia. We went to Adelaide, Melbourne, and I stopped in Sydney.

and we sat around talking about stuff that was relevant to the RSC. Specifically its effort to emulate the Berlin Ensemble; trying to do away with the star system. I joined the RSC at the same time as Trevor Nunn who at 25 took over the artistic directorship and wanted to change the credits system. I remember this being discussed at the Grateful Dead party. I didn't know who these people were at that stage but I remember them talking about owning their own work and making sure that they didn't just answer the telephone and take a job, but rather, that they created their own work. That's what they managed to do and have kept doing. I've often felt quite pleased, even though I didn't understand it at the time, that notion has helped me in my quest for creating my own work, even among groups of people, which I will continue to do.

SC: What was it like working on *STONE*?

HKB: I found it incredibly liberating simply because, having come from England and having limited experience in film — in England in those days the film crews were very much more like 50-year-old focus pullers. Everybody would just be a focus puller. They didn't go from focus to something else, like they do here. In general, the crews were much older in England. It took a long time to get established, whereas here, it was all on. I'd been ten years in the theatre which is a very different world. What interested me about film was the collaboration of so many disciplines. You had people who were bike-riders or whatever, people you'd never meet in the theatre and it was all on location. We were never in the studio.

SC: I heard there was some grave digging required?

HKB: Yes, I did some digging. That was what I mean in terms of it being very small scale and, if a grave needed digging, "OK, I've got the day off I'll go out and help." I remember Helen Morse sewing costumes. I ripped my trousers at one point and she repaired them. I miss it when that doesn't happen in films now. That feeling of camaraderie and the energy — very important, an essential ingredient for me. I felt I was being part of something vibrant and alive. There was nobody sitting around thinking, "OK, when's lunch?" Everybody was just powering on.

SC: About that opening scene to *STONE*, while it introduces political assassination to Australia you were tripping?

HKB: Yes, I was tripping. In fact, I was only pretending to trip. They had a lens which they developed, to show my point of view, which was psychedelic. I remember there being quite a lot of interest there at the time.

SC: You didn't like the finished work initially?

HKB: Not 'didn't like it.' I didn't see its qualities: I just saw it as a film. It's a strange thing, when you're a



SC: You toured the US in the '60s.

HKB: I was lucky enough to go to San Francisco and Los Angeles with the RSC in '68. Coming from the south of England, that was an eye-opening experience in every sense. One of those real growing-up things. I didn't really have a swinging London but I certainly had a swinging West Coast.

SC: Any Americans you met during that period impress you?

HKB: Once I was in a place with the Grateful Dead

migrant to a country you at first see all the things that are similar and then you start to realize the differences. And I think that is what I have appreciated over the years as people have come to talk to me about *STONE* or I've watched it on video or whatever. So I have enjoyed it more and more. There's a Brian Trenchard-Smith *MAKING OF STONE* documentary somewhere.

SC: Which leads to *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*.

HKB: (laughs) Another joy. That was a co-production with Golden Harvest and I think that broke some barriers here initially. Trenchard-Smith and a wonderful man called John Fraser, a distributor, managed to get this co-production up and it was all local — except for some management people from Golden Harvest and a couple of stars. That was another whole different world, the stunt people. I met a whole lot of martial artists.

SC: How was working with Trenchard-Smith?

HKB: He's a very sweet and naive man with a background very similar to mine — middle class English — and here he is in Oz being wonderfully brave in terms of his own stunt-work. He'd do car knockdowns, with sort of a madness, always leading from the front. Great fun! He really gets involved. He's a fencer. He used to do car knockdowns to publicize films. He used to go out and stand in front of a bloody car doing 40 mph.

SC: How was working with Jimmy Wang-Yu?

HKB: Pretty extraordinary. I'd never been around martial arts people before and that was pretty impressive. To be physically close to someone doing that sort of shit was pretty far out.

SC: How about *MAD DOG MORGAN*?

HKB: That was a tale that had always interested me and my partner, who is also a film-maker. We'd been talking about it and suddenly, out of the blue Philippe Mora, because of *STONE*, offered me a very small part in it. That was fascinating to meet someone like Dennis Hopper. He was full-on. I rode to work with him a couple of times. Just watching him was another of those things where I thought, "Oh, right," because it had nothing to do with the theatre. My film experience was so limited at the time that just to see someone extemporizing and going for it was another of those liberating things. I thought the film had a lot more qualities than it was given credit for.

SC: Did you have any scenes with Hopper?

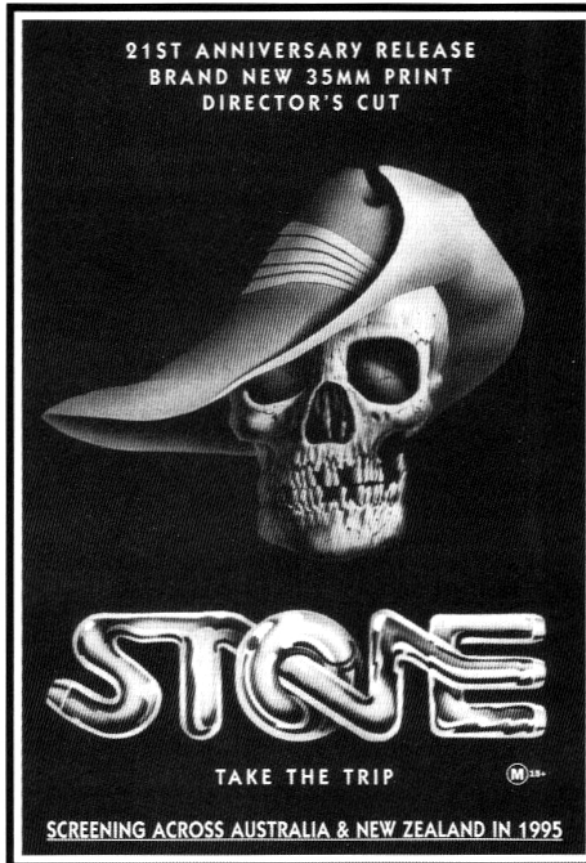
HKB: Just one where he comes riding up and shoots me in the hand because he thinks I've doxxed him in for something. But that was it. I was only there for a couple of days. I put out my hand and remember that they used an air gun with a blood bag to shoot me.

SC: What did you think of Hopper's performance?

HKB: It's very difficult. I only ever saw the film once but I remember it being pretty impressive. Morgan seemed to be a pretty scary sort of character. I liked that kookaburra laughing — all of that. And I think the unpredictable nature of his acting, being out on a limb — I really enjoyed it. It wasn't safe. It certainly wasn't *NED KELLY*, even though I quite liked that too. That was different, somehow softer, not quite so weird.

SC: How did you get involved in *MAD MAX*?

HKB: A friend of mine, was out here living with us and doing a film *ELIZA FRASER*. We had a big share house for some 20 odd years. He was talking to George Miller who came around one day and asked if I'd like to get involved. At that time we had a small company. We were putting on various bits and pieces and Miller asked if I could help with the casting and whether I'd be interested in performing? I said 'yes'.



They'd just made *VIOLENCE IN THE CINEMA*, their only film. He and Byron came around some more but it felt shaky. You think, "Will they get the money?" It was one of those things. Then I didn't hear from them for some time. I was getting people together then it went quiet. I thought, "Oh well, it hasn't happened." Then they came back and we got more serious. I started to put Toecutter's gang together. Miller had obviously been talking to people as well. I remember him auditioning various women to play Jessie. Then there was a fair bit of swapping around. Overall, I felt a bit let down by the process because I was expecting more of a future reward. "If this goes well we'll all be looked after. Don't worry." So we took very low wages. It was very much, "We've got no money." We understood that. I've worked on heaps of small films for nothing. And then, of course, it made so much money and we had to take him to court to get the video rights. We had to take him to court because they'd dubbed it in America.

SC: Did you ever see the dubbed version?

HKB: I saw it by chance in New York. It just turned up on television. My voice was dubbed — and that hurt. Weird. Very rude — because that's what I do. It's not just the voice, it's the way you intone, the way you are. I felt insulted. I also felt insulted because a friend of mine, when they were doing the dubbing, rang up and said, "Hugh, they're dubbing you." I said, "What?" He said, "They're in the next suite in Los

Angeles. They're dubbing it." I said, "No, they wouldn't." Then we contacted George and he said, "No." I felt really fucking let down by all of that. It's a weird thing because he's such a bright man and had such good ideas with all the possibilities. To work on this film was going to be really exciting because he was very open to all our suggestions, which is exactly what one needs to create a piece like that. Everybody's got to be involved and come up with stuff — get the energy levels right up there. And I think we did that for them. In the end, having made so much money and not actually saying, "Here. Have some," I think that was a shame.

SC: What was the general feel on the set?

HKB: There was a dangerous feeling because people used to go to work every morning on the bikes and were falling off fairly regularly. A friend who's working on *JOURNEY* showed me an old production still the other day. It was sparse. There were about 5 people behind the camera. It looked like a small film school production compared to what happens now. It's in the Guinness Book of Records as having made the most money for the least outlay of any film on the planet.

SC: Any more specific memories from *MAD MAX*?

HKB: Just four of us living in a room and all getting on our bikes and revving them first thing in the morning and people leaning out of windows and yelling at us. Police escorting us to work and driving through the city. We had an official letter from the Victorian Film Commission stating, "These people are actors." (laughs) A sort of get out of jail free card. We were continually getting stopped.

SC: Some people say *STONE* was a dress rehearsal for *MAD MAX*?

HKB: No. A different kind of thing, very different. *STONE* was more of a community thing and *MAD MAX* was sheer fantasy. I think Harbutt felt they ripped him off a bit but, in fact, I don't think they had. Obviously they wanted as many people as they could from *STONE*, but I never even thought of *STONE* when I was doing *MAD MAX*. That wasn't a similar world we were trying to create at all. We were much more into a much weirder, much less real world. Bikers in *MAD MAX* didn't go down to the pubs and have molls. They were much weirder. More science fiction.

SC: Did you do any research for your character in *MAD MAX*?

HKB: Sitting around talking with Vincent Gil and Timmy Burns. Talking with all these people about how we were going to do with this monster gang. How could you make it viable? Make it not a laughable thing. Make it real but unreal. Real Bikies prefer *STONE* and see *MAD MAX* as a bit poofy.

SC: SNAPSHOT?

HKB: *SNAPSHOT* was made by Tony Ginnane (*ESCAPE 2000*, *PATRICK*) who was entrepreneurial but quite open. When we said we should sit down and talk about this a bit more he was right into it. People have a lot of bad things to say about him but I found him interesting. He never bullshitted me and he always paid the money. He didn't muck about. He was always around — trying to get it right. Always seemed to be with groups of businessmen.

SC: Did you ever meet the script writer Everett De

Roche?

HKB: Yes, a lovely man. I felt that it was important to meet and talk with the scriptwriter and to try and develop certain things. He was up for it and a meeting with all of the cast was held. We had a couple of days down here. I thought that was good. Simon Wincer was the director and went on to do *LONE-SOME DOVE* which is one of the most interesting pieces of television I've ever seen. I just thought it was a great tale and that they did it really well. *LONE-SOME DOVE* — a very good Western; excellent.

SC: How was working on *WHERE THE GREEN ANTS DREAM*?

HKB: That was quite extraordinary because Herzog said "Read the script," and he was being super polite and I think what he meant me to do was choose a part or ask to play one of the parts. I said, "Thanks for letting me read the script," and gave it back to him, waiting for him to say something. He'd come around to the house with his brother. Anyway, he looked at this belt I've got and said, "Can I borrow that for work?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I'll pay you for it." So he took the belt and went off saying "Will you just come down and walk on." I said "Sure." He paid me a huge amount to come down to Melbourne for 2 or 3 days and walk on. A companion came with me, and Herzog gave him the part of a judge. This friend of mine is not an actor at all. I was Norman Kaye's bodyguard and just had a few things with Bruce Spence. I stayed with Ralph Cotterill who was in the RSC and was in *BAD BOY BUBBY*, who had one of the bigger parts. We spent all the time talking. There was none of that power play and bullshit about auditioning. Herzog just comes around and wants to know you and you're intrigued.

SC: Werner Herzog has a reputation...

HKB: Of giving you a hard time? I think that depends on how it goes because he's a hard-head. No question. We showed him a couple of documentaries we'd made and he loved one and dismissed the other totally out of hand.

SC: *LES PATTERSON SAVES THE WORLD*.

HKB: That was one of the funniest scripts I've ever read and also one of the hairiest first nights I've ever been to — it felt like everybody was loving it and then nobody loved it. It was like — (pitifully) oohh. The big after-party was exceedingly quiet! *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH's* George Miller directed it. It was great fun to do, an absolute hoot, because Barry Humphries is such a clever man, as is George Miller. A different George Miller now than then.

SC: How was working with Rutger Hauer on *THE BLOOD OF HEROES*?

HKB: Rutger Hauer was silly — he was just wandering around with a film camera all the time.

SC: What was he doing?

HKB: I don't know. Sort of, 'this is my life.' (laughs) It was crazy. He never stopped. David Peoples was interesting. I thought that I was probably miscast. They should have had a smaller person. I was supposed to be the king of the jungle. These guys would never bow to me though. Whatever Hauer's character is, he's still a fucking gladiator. He should have been on his hands and knees most of the time when I'm about — you know what I mean? I had difficulty there but I think that was something to do with the power structure.

SC: The actual 'game' with the bones was entire-**ly silly.**

HKB: I think that was David Peoples not being able to come to terms with inventing the right game and not spending enough time in rehearsal to develop it. It could have been any game at all, but really, what we're interested in is what happens between these people, and the world they're existing in, the harshness of that, should have been the story. I think that would have been an interesting story but, of course, it wasn't.

"I saw [MAD MAX] by chance in New York. It just turned up on television. My voice was dubbed — and that hurt. Weird. Very rude — because that's what I do. It's not just the voice, it's the way you intone, the way you are. I felt insulted."

SC: How did *RESISTANCE* come about?

HKB: Over the years, right back before *MAD MAX*, even from *STONE's* time, when we first came out from England, a group of us got together to try to find some way to create our own work. So, we came up with a few different projects, made some small films, a film about Peter Brook called *STAGES*, and Aboriginal people's involvement in the Adelaide Festival. We always had Sunday meetings for people and other writers, always looking for a project. We spent about a year discussing different things. There were a whole lot of things going on, we were trying all sorts of things. We eventually thought, "OK, let's put down a film for ourselves." And that built and it got bigger. Three of us went away and wrote something and then more people got involved. On *RESISTANCE* there's 70 odd people with copyright ownership of the script. We tried to break as many rules as possible. Everybody on the film, pretty much, has a piece of the action. They are actual physical investors or cash investors. We managed to put — tried to put — labor and capital on equal terms; worker ownership. And, in the event, we managed it. Christine spent a great deal of time on the contracts, working with the lawyer and the accountant. A lot of work was done in trying to open up new territories in terms of how deals could be put together. The Australian Film Commission came in at various stages. Then of course we had to ensure that this was going to happen. Then, eventually we raised the finance and did it. We had a moderate success with it in America in that it opened at the Angelika Centre and ran for 5 weeks there and got fair to good reviews. The fact that we didn't allow distribution in earlier might have been an issue. But that's one of those things that, if what you're trying to do — imagine splitting your film between 300 different people in terms of returns — then you need to protect as much of that as possible, so you don't want to let people in with just cash early because their percentage is quite high at that stage. Once we were finished we would show it to them and it would blow them away and they'd throw money at us. (laughs) They didn't!!

SC: Did you always consider it an international project or Australian?

HKB: Very much an international project but completely Australian based so we didn't go casting stars. We were trying to break norms maybe to the point of ridiculousness. We wanted a group hero; we didn't want any one hero. We wanted women to play major parts. We wanted all different things, which people told us, when we sent it off to them, "No, no. You can't do this or that." We were pretty much experimental in

terms of what we were trying to do. But what we did to start it off was to make a 10-minute film we did at the Newtown dump. We took that around which encouraged more interest than the script. People thought that this looked like a starter. It worked well in terms of raising finance.

SC: How did you arrive at the near future setting?

HKB: A bit like trying to be allegorical; of trying to tell a tale but not wanting it to be set in Australia. We

wanted it to be set in a world so you weren't exactly sure where we were. We didn't want to have Australian aboriginal people but we wanted aboriginal people. We didn't want Australian migratory workers so we tried Tex-Mex, Pacific Rim. This could be anywhere. And a lot of the issues we were discussing as we were making the film were things that were happening all over the world and not necessarily in Australia; but then sometimes they were in Australia. The military oppression has never really been an issue in Australia but it is an issue in the majority of the world.

SC: How did you feel about the finished product?

HKB: I think it's always impossible. It's like looking at yourself in a movie — you can never believe yourself. For me, I was blown away by the fact that we'd done it after all that time — it took us nearly 10 years. 12 from the initial thinking to when it's up there on the screen. You think "Wow!!" It's a most extraordinary thing. I thought "Well, we did it." It wasn't just sitting round the table blowing hot air. We actually made it. And we made it in the way we wanted to make it in terms of how it was. All the mistakes were ours. Nobody came from the outside and said, "You have to do this or that." We made the final cut so I appreciate that.

SC: Do you think making movies by committee is the way to go?

HKB: I believe so and that's my personal thing. I don't mean that's the best way or the only way or anything like that but that's what interests me. My interest is in working with groups of people. How big that group is or how small that group is I'm not sure but that's the way that interests me. People working together to put on something.

SC: Did you take the director's credit on *RESISTANCE*?

HKB: No, I took co-director's credit. Two of us did it, Paul Elliot and myself. The only collective credit on there was for the writing which said "Macau Collective" as writer. We had endless votes on this and, for me and Christine and a few others, we would have made it more collective. We would have gone much more the alphabetical way but all sorts of outside pressures, outside and inside people, wanted... I mean, the sound firm, they went collectively in terms of the credits. That was the way I'd hoped we'd go. In a sense it's more interesting because it doesn't happen much. People go "What the fuck's that?" Which is probably what one has to do, isn't it — to be different? ☺



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|---|--|
| ☐ Alien Prey ('83/UK) Alien interlopes two lesbians | ☐ The Last Hunter ('80/Italian) Tisa Farrow, Uncut |
| ☐ Amuck! ('78/Ital.) Farley Granger, Barbara Bouchet | ☐ The Legend of Blood Castle ('72/Spain-Italian) |
| ☐ Assault ('70/UK) Suzy Kendall, Frank Finlay | ☐ Legend of the Wolfwoman ('76/Italian) Nude wolf! |
| ☐ Asylum Erotica ('71/Ital.) Klaus Kinski, Rosalba Neri | ☐ Let's Get Laid ('77/UK) Linda Hayden in sex romp |
| ☐ Autopsy ('76/Italian) Mimsey Farmer, aka "Tarot" | ☐ The Love Camp ('80/German) Laura Gemser naked |
| ☐ Baron Munchausen ('43/In Ger. w/Eng subs) Rare | ☐ The Loves of Inna ('73) Uncut 'X', Jess Franco dir. |
| ☐ A Bell From Hell ('73/Spain) Viveca Lindfors | ☐ Make Them Lie Slowly ('80/Ital.) Umberto Lenzi dir. |
| ☐ Beyond The Darkness ('79) Twisted Joe D'Amato dir | ☐ Mandinga ('76/Italian) Plantations, slaves and sex |
| ☐ Beyond The Door ('74/Italian) Exorcist exploitation | ☐ Ms. Stiletto ('69/Ital.) Brigitte Skay, Fred Williams |
| ☐ The Big Bust Out ('73/Ital) WIP Epic, Nudity & rape | ☐ Naked Super Witches of the Rio Amore ('77) Franco |
| ☐ The Big Zapper ('73/UK) Violent PI Linda Marlowe | ☐ Night of the Seagulls ('75/Spain) 4th Blind Dead |
| ☐ The Bitch ('79/UK) Joan Collins in disco sex movie | ☐ Night Train Murders ('74/Ital./Libx) Aldo Lado dir. |
| ☐ The Black Panther ('77/UK) Sadist tortures heiress | ☐ Nothing But the Night ('72/UK) C. Lee, P. Cushing |
| ☐ Blood of the Vampire ('58/UK) Barbara Shelley | ☐ Nuns of S'ant Archangelo ('73/Italian/Letterboxed) |
| ☐ The Blood Spattered Bride ('72/Ital) Carmilla rises | ☐ Obsession: A Taste For Fear ('89/Italian) Uncut |
| ☐ The Body ('67/Italian) Carroll Baker's 1st Giallo | ☐ Orgias Inconfessables de Emmanuelle ('82/In Span.) |
| ☐ Body Talk ('81/X) Angelique Pettyjohn, Kay Parker | ☐ The Other Hell ('80/Italian) Possessed naked nuns! |
| ☐ Brain of Blood ('71/Filipino) Al Adamson directs | ☐ The Oval Portrait ('72/Mex) Based on Edgar A. Poe |
| ☐ Burke and Hare ('71/UK) Yvette Stenggaard nude! | ☐ Pets ('73/UK) Topless women in chains & cages |
| ☐ Castle of Unholy Desires ('67/Spain) Adrian Hoven dir. | ☐ Pirates of Blood River ('62/UK) Christopher Lee |
| ☐ Count Dracula ('78/BBC TV) Louis Jordan, 2 f hrs | ☐ The Raincoat Crowd ('79/X) Desiree Cousteau |
| ☐ Creature with the Blue Hand ('71/German) K. Kinski | ☐ Return of the Zombies ('72/Spain) Paul Naschy |
| ☐ Cry of a Prostitute ('72/Italian) Barbara Bouchet | ☐ The Rogue ('76/Ital) Barbara Bouchet, Margaret Lee |
| ☐ Dark Places ('72/UK) Joan Collins, Christopher Lee | ☐ The Rue Morgue Massacre ('72/Spain) Paul Naschy |
| ☐ Death Faces ('88/UK) Disgusting real atrocities! | ☐ Salon Kitty ('76/Ital.) Helmut Berger, Ingrid Thulin |
| ☐ The Demons ('72) Jess Franco's sex-crazed nuns | ☐ Seven Blows of the Dragon ('73/Chin-Eng dubbed) |
| ☐ The Devil ('75/Chin-Eng. Dub) Gory Exorcist Fu! | ☐ The Sex Machine ('75/Italian) Agostina Belli, "R" |
| ☐ The Devil Doll ('64/UK) Yvonne Romain | ☐ The Sexorcist ('74/Ital.) Stella Carnachia writhes! |
| ☐ The Devil Ship Pirates ('64/UK) Christopher Lee | ☐ The Sin of Adam and Eve ('72/Mex.) Bible nude! |
| ☐ Desert Tigers ('79/Ital.) Lea Lander & raping Nazis | ☐ Slave of the Cannibal God ('78) Ursula Andress |
| ☐ Dr. Jekyll et les Femmes ('81/in Fren/Libx) Udo Kier | ☐ Slavers ('79) Slave trade epic. Britt Ekland, Ron Ely |
| ☐ Dr. Terror's House of Horrors ('64) Cushing, Lee | ☐ S.S. Hell Camp ('76/Ital) Violence, Nudity, Torture! |
| ☐ Dracula Blows His Cool ('79/German) Sex farce | ☐ Stairline Motel ('75/Ital) Ursula Andress, Barbara Bach |
| ☐ Emmanuelle's Revenge ('76/Ital.) Joe D'Amato dir. | ☐ Summer Affair ('79/Ital.) Ornella Muti skinnydips |
| ☐ Emperor Caligula: The Untold Story ('81/Italian) | ☐ Syndicate Sadists ('72/Ital.) Umberto Lenzi directs |
| ☐ Escape From Blood Plantation ('75/Ital.) Udo Kier | ☐ Terror ('74/Italian) Nun takes revenge on her rapist |
| ☐ Eyes Without a Face ('59/in French/Eng subs/Libx.) | ☐ The Terrormasters ('67/UK-Amicus) Zena Marshall |
| ☐ Frankenstein's Great-Aunt Tillie ('83/UK) Pleasance | ☐ Tiffany Jones ('74/UK) Anouska Hempel. Sex spoof |
| ☐ Fraulein Devil ('77/Ital.) 3rd Reich Pleasure Train | ☐ Tin Pity She's A Whoop ('73/Ital.) Charlotte Rampling |
| ☐ The Groove Room ('73/UK) Diana Dors, Sex comedy | ☐ Titillation ('82/X) Angelique Pettyjohn, K. Natavidad |
| ☐ Horror of the Zombies ('74/Spain) 3rd Blind Dead | ☐ Tomb of Torture ('63/Italian) Annie Albert/Rare |
| ☐ Hot & Saucy Pizza Girls ('78/X) Desiree Cousteau | ☐ Torso ('73/Italian) Suzy Kendall, John Richardson |
| ☐ House on Straw Hill ('75) Linda Hayden, Udo Kier | ☐ Torture Chamber of Dr. Sadism ('67/Ital) Chris Lee |
| ☐ The Human Beast ('78/Italian) Helmut Berger | ☐ Tower of Evil ('72/UK) Bryan Halliday, Jill Haworth |
| ☐ Hundira ('85/Ital.) Laurence Landon, Marissa Casel | ☐ 2069: A Sex Odyssey ('78/Ger.) Sci-Fi Alien Babes |
| ☐ I Want You ('78/X) Uschi Digart, John Holmes | ☐ Twitch of the Death Nerve ('71/Italian) Mario Bava |
| ☐ The Icebox Murders ('81/Spain) Jack Taylor | ☐ El Vampiro ('57/Mex./in Spanish) German Robles |
| ☐ Lisa, She Wolf of the S.S. ('74) Dyanne Thorne | ☐ Vampyres ('74/UK/Uncut) Anulka, Marianne Morris |
| ☐ Lisa, The Wicked Warden ('77) Jess Franco, Uncut | ☐ The Virgin of Nuremberg ('63/Italian) Chris Lee |
| ☐ Inn of the Damned ('74/Australian) Alex Cord | ☐ Welcome to Blood City ('77/UK) Jack Palance |
| ☐ Island of the Burning Doomed ('67/UK) P. Cushing | ☐ When the Screaming Stops ('72/Spain) Helga Line |
| ☐ Lady Stay Dead ('83/Aust) Gory psycho on the loose | ☐ A Witch Without a Broom ('68/Spain) Maria Perschy |
| ☐ Land of the Minotaur ('77/UK) Peter Cushing | ☐ Witchfinder General ('68/UK/Vincent Price, Uncut |

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FILM FLOTSAM

READERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

TOM FITZGERALD; San Francisco, CA.

ROOTS OF THE EARTHMAN (1977). Image a bunch of flaky new agers from a 70's swingers condo making a no-budget flick about UFOs coming into contact with cavemen. Imagine the dialogue and narrative are all improvised in a kind of group therapy psycho drama, bringing the cast's personal hang-ups to the surface. Welcome to the world of Unarius. Led by Uriel, a Glenda the Good Witch-like gramma, this long standing cult of UFO worshippers believe they're reincarnations of historical figures and space creatures. You might have seen one of their many self-produced projects on public access cable. In this inspired effort Zan, a member of some prehistoric, idol-worshipping tribe, is visited by bald beatific aliens in a spaceship lit up like a discofied Xmas tree. When he returns to the village, his story is met with rejection and ridicule. Defending their big fire-spitting skullhead totem, the tribe's witch doctor fights the threat of these new gods from the sky by banishing the enlightened one. But some believe Zan and go off seeking the mother ship. Meanwhile back at the village, the others have a wild, drunken bonfire party highlighted by an impromptu punishment ritual as a wayward cavegirl is forced to dance naked. All of this hits a new level of otherworldly creepiness when you take into account these folks really believe that by improvising their roles, they're actually channeling their past cave-dwelling lives. Get on board at www.unarius.org.

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES FOR ADULTS (1969). See all your favorite children's classics done go-go German sex-comedy style. The comely Marie Liljedahl (INGA) stars as a scantily clad Snow White. Lost in the woods, she's accosted by leering dogs, frogs, snakes, and a big bear. The Seven Dwarves, after magically manifesting from some big mushrooms, come to her rescue. The jealous Evil Queen plots to poison Snow and gobble up her sex organs! To assist her in her evil doings, she elicits the help of the Wicked Witch who's busy turning couples into birds and pigs by flicking her tongue into the camera. There's some genuinely nutty little touches making this one stand out from the run-of-the-mill fairy tale skin flick. As when the village bumpkins Hans and Hans find a "crop" of naked children. And you haven't lived 'til you see Snow exhibit the unorthodox way she milks a cow. Even more perverse are the gory bits, as when we visit an old hag who butchers and eats young girls. And how about Cinderella conjuring her dress for the Ball by wearing a severed finger around her neck! Or when her evil sisters slice off their toes and heels to fit into the magic slipper (youch!), which is in fact, how the original story went before this and other Grimm's tales were sanitized for modern consumption. In the end, Prince Charming rouses Snow White through sex, defeats the Witch and frees the captive couples. Elsewhere in the woods, a horny princess passes on kissing a frog, but instead balls a bear transforming him into a prince. And they all fucked happily ever after.

LIFE SIZE [Grandeur Nature; The Doll] (1974). After going out on a limb with daring roles in arthouse dementia like LA GRANDE BOUFFE and THEMROC, Michel Piccoli turned to this equally outrageous outing. He plays a Parisian dentist who falls in love with his lifelike buxom blonde sexdoll. They do it all; eat, shower, dance and screw. Haunted by her silence and blank stare, he does anything to try and make her happy. Piccoli even dons fur n' stockings in a drag rou-

tine for her, videotaping all of these shenanigans so they can cuddle and reminisce. Things turn sour though when he discovers a repairman has molested his Barbie doll lover. His jealousy grows and obsession turns darker, moving the story beyond its Playboy joke premise and creating some real pathos. In fact, after awhile you almost forget he's hung up on a cold, synthetic piece of material. And, particularly with Piccoli's all-out tour de force performance, it becomes one of the more twisted love stories you'll see. Definitely not a good date movie.

VERUSCHKA (1970). I expected this to be your average fashion spread travelogue of a European super model and her glamorous life. I was surprised to find out it's actually more of a moody, druggy meditation on death. German model Veruschka plays herself traveling and bickering with her lover/manager through the Italian countryside. The action picks up though when we witness her continual fantasies, flashbacks and premonitions. The pic benefits from a strong visual style with earthy psychedelic textures and some striking photography. In her own self-absorbed world she wanders through increasingly fatalistic set pieces; finding broken dolls and mirrors in the sand; twisting, squashing and burning mold replicas of her face; wearing camouflage make-up and blending into exotic environments; getting trapped in a room slowly filling up with dirt; guzzling mushroom tea and freaking out with the nekkid kraut-rockers Anima (also in SEX FREEDOM IN GERMANY); and imagining she's some jungle animal making love to herself. Drenching everything in glossy 70's symbolism, fashion-photographer/director Franco Rubartelli attempts to show life in the spotlight as a suffocating existential bummer. An icy, beautiful, but kinda shallow mix of angst and eye candy aided by a silky Morricone score.

ADAM GROVES; Manhattan Beach, CA.

FLAGRANT DESIR (1986). Ever wonder what French anarchist Claude Faraldo (THEMROC) has been up to since his heyday in the seventies? Actually, this is about the last thing I'd expect from Faraldo, an extremely slick Chabrol-style thriller. After a young woman drowns in a swamp, an American detective (a sleepwalking Sam Waterston) investigates her family, a wealthy clan living on a plantation-like abode in rural France. Surprise! He uncovers a web of incest, betrayal and murder. The good news: the film is visually stunning, features some skilled thespians (including Lauren Hutton and THE VANISHING'S Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu) and boasts a compelling swamp-land setting that I definitely haven't seen before.

The bad news: the only available copy of this extremely plot-heavy Frogland film is unsubtitled, so I really can't give you a full review; but it certainly looks good! **SINBAD [SZINDBAD] (1970).** A prime example of a premise popular with foreign filmmakers in the late-sixties/early-seventies: that of an old man reminiscing about his debauched life. Obviously this isn't a Harryhausen flick, but nor is it by any stretch of the imagination an exploitation film. It's a Hungarian ART film (as in ponderous and pretentious as fuck); a hallucinatory, virtually plotless stew of Godardian flash cuts, opulent scenery, beautiful women and a few (maddeningly brief) flashes of T&A. Too uneventful and one-note for my tastes, but I can't deny that it's a startling, one-of-a-kind vision. If only more people had seen it, I strongly believe this would have been one of the most influential films of the seventies. What else has director Zoltan Huszarik done?



THE LYNDA CARTER VARIETY SPECIALS (1979-84). I can't believe I sat through ALL FOUR of these things! From the first moments of part one, as former Wonder Woman Lynda Carter appears on-stage, microphone in hand, and mangles Still's "Love the One You're With"—I knew I was in for a rough ride. Lynda's "always wanted to be a singer," you see, and somehow convinced CBS to air these monstrosities. Throughout the remaining four hours LC chats with her "celebrity guests" (Tom Jones, Kenny Rogers, Ben Vereen and others), sings of course (the less said about this the better) and, best of all, wears lots of outrageous outfits. She looks great throughout, no question, and the best moments are definitely those where she's at her most vampish (i.e. belting out gospel tunes while gyrating in a slit skirt and spike heels). But her undeniable charisma quickly wears thin. Even the most die-hard Lynda fan will have trouble suppressing the bile through the advice-to-the-kids bit ("Pulling someone out of quicksand is the kind of bravery that makes headlines; but we can't all do that"), the soft-focus shots of LC riding her horse (set to her own composition "Toto I Get the Feeling We're Not In Kansas Anymore"), the LC baby picture montage (stop me, please!); final verdict: goofy time-capsule fun, but DO NOT attempt to watch all four episodes in a single sitting! You will cause irreparable brain damage, GUARANTEED!

H (1990). The Phantom of the Movies once claimed that nearly fifty percent of the world's most depressing films come from Canada. He must have seen this, a worthy (though imperfect) entry into junkie cinema. Owing something to Shirley Clarke's **THE CONNECTION** (1961), writer/director Darrell Wasky tells the story of boyfriend/girlfriend junkies who decide to kick at the same time (do I really need to tell you what the H stands for?). They barricade themselves in his tiny basement apartment and hallucinate, have sex, babble incoherently and eventually find a hidden stash of junk. Without giving anything away, one of them dies and the other is Changed Forever. This being a Canadian film, I guess we shouldn't be surprised by the unevenness of the whole enterprise; while many scenes have the raw power suggested by the premise, others play like outtakes from a bad high school play. The performances are similarly scattershot (though I gotta say, lead Martin Neufeld sports a way cool full-body tattoo). One of the primo feel-bad movies of the decade, best viewed as a (sorta) realistic antidote to TRAINSPOTTING.

KINGSGATE (1989). More fun from our friends up north. A few issues back I reviewed **DESERTERS**, an early film from Canadian auteur Jack Darcus. Well, despite a near-universal lack of recognition (his latest film, an Indian reservation-drama, recently bombed at Sundance), he's back. I assume Darcus must have gone through a particularly nasty breakup to create this, my hands-down pick for date movie of the year. A geeky fortyish professor is fucking his twentyish pupil. She takes him home to meet her parents; within minutes of arriving, dad's mistress is having orgasms on the answering machine and mom is scissoring his clothes. They hightail it to the secluded country home of a writer friend and his wife, only to find an even more unbelievably fucked-up relationship than the one they just left. Sure enough, the good professor's own none-too-stable relationship quickly unravels and everything goes to Hell. Once again, this is a Canadian film (sigh) so we have to make concessions for the film-school cinematography and often amateurish perfs (Christopher Plummer, the token Movie Star, adds some much-needed professionalism). Thankfully, Darcus's script is top notch; nastier and arguably more intelligent than similarly-themed Hollywood fare (**HUSBANDS AND WIVES** and **YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS** come to mind). A potent illustration of one of its character's oft-repeated assertions that "relationships are a duel to the death!" See it with someone you love!

MILES WOOD; Hong Kong.

INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION (1980). The decidedly uncharismatic Jean-Louis Broust is the less-than-competent French cop, assigned to fly to Hong Kong to pick up a fugitive pimp (exploitation vet Gabrielle Tinti), wanted for the manslaughter of his "girlfriend" who'd decided she didn't want to be "for sale"

anymore. When their return flight is delayed Tinti persuades Broust to while away the hours with a visit to a nightclub, where a nude dancer performs an act with lighted candles, and the pair round off the evening with a session with a couple of whores, even though Broust insists they remain handcuffed together. It's no surprise to anyone, except the dim-witted Broust, that he winds up drugged, and awakens to find Tinti has fled. In need of "someone who know their way around Hong Kong," this genius decides the best plan of action is to fly to Bangkok(!) where he recruits the dead girl's sister, a masseuse (Laura Gemser), who he hires for a week. Inexplicably, Gemser instantly falls for Broust, and on their return to HK — where Broust no sooner finds Tinti, then loses him again — they spend as much time in the sack as they do tracking down their prey. A hilarious European view of the "exotic" Orient, where all Thai women are slaves to be bought and sold and to serve men, where HK is crammed with "prostitution schools" and "dangerous places so bad that Westerners never go." The bevy of naked Asian women, including Gemser, is probably just about the only reason anyone would want to sit through this French junk (titled **BRIGADE CRIMINELLE** in its homeland), though the score is appropriately funky at times.

OUR MOTHER'S HOUSE (1967). Six years after his chilling ghost story **THE INNOCENTS**, director Jack Clayton paints an equally unsettling picture of troubled youth. When their bed-ridden mother croaks, seven children, less than happy with the thought of life in an orphanage, elect to bury her body in the garden and carry on much as before. Things go

reasonably smoothly with Jiminee (MELODY's Mark Lester) forging dead mom's signature and cashing her monthly checks, until the arrival of long-departed father Charlie (Dirk Bogarde), summoned by eldest brother Hugh (Louis Sheldon Williams) who feared for the health of youngest sister Gertie (Phoebe Nichols). Initially the kids are charmed by Charlie — Diana (Pamela Franklin who debuted in **THE INNOCENTS**) develops a crush on him, and Clayton gives us another creepy "kiss" between adult and child — but after he's wasted all their mother's savings on booze and betting, Charlie raises their ire when he threatens to end their domestic arrangement and sell the house. The film has a general air of unease with several outright disturbing scenes, such as Diana supposedly communicating the wishes of their fanatically religious dead mother, ordering Gertie to have all her hair chopped off as punishment for accepting a ride on a stranger's motorbike, and then when she falls seriously ill refusing to allow a doctor to be sent for. While **THE INNOCENTS** benefited from Freddie Francis' striking black-and-white scope photography, the drab Metrocolor makes **OUR MOTHER'S HOUSE** far less pleasing to look at, but it helps keep the movie from ever turning into fun kiddie fare, a path that the material might have tempted a more commercially-minded filmmaker to stray down.

GERARD ALEXANDER; Australia

RIO DAS MORTES (1970). My friends have always told me I should check out the anarchic works of director Rainer Werner Fassbinder so, ever keen to please them I proceeded to watch this early offering by the auteur. It's the enthralling tale of Hanna and Michel, two young beautiful people with the future to look forward to. Michel and Gunther, his best friend, are both Tiler apprentices but they want more from life, they want to go to Peru! Michel has a map showing a river in Peru where riches may be found. Of course, they haven't much money for their fares so the bulk of this film deals with their schemes to get some. Michel sells his car to Ulli Lommel (who came to life in the 80's as director of **THE BOOGIE MAN**), here portraying a used car dealer. Gunther gets the money his mother had invested for his future and uses it for the adventure. Eventually an artist funds their expedition and the film ends with their plane leaving. How did I last the full 83 minutes? Was it the spectacle of Fassbinder dancing to "Jailhouse Rock" at a cheap disco that kept me going? Excuse me, I'm just off to get some new friends...

CROSSTALK (1982). This low budget Australian feature directed by Mark Egerton promises to be a variation on the **DEMON SEED** plot (computer runs the household for its research scientist occupant and eventually runs amok). Annoyingly this did not occur soon enough for my twisted taste. Though the I-500



computer does break down early in the story, the bulk of the plot is concerned with an "evil" corporation guy who wants to sell these faulty computers to the public and doesn't want our hero to speak out. A nice subplot about the computer's sensory surveyor detecting a murder in the apartment above helps keep one's interest for another 10 minutes or so but the predictable "surprise" ending leaves no doubt as to the involvement of 3 writers in the screenplay. Or maybe I'm just getting harder to please.

IS THERE ANYBODY THERE? (1975).

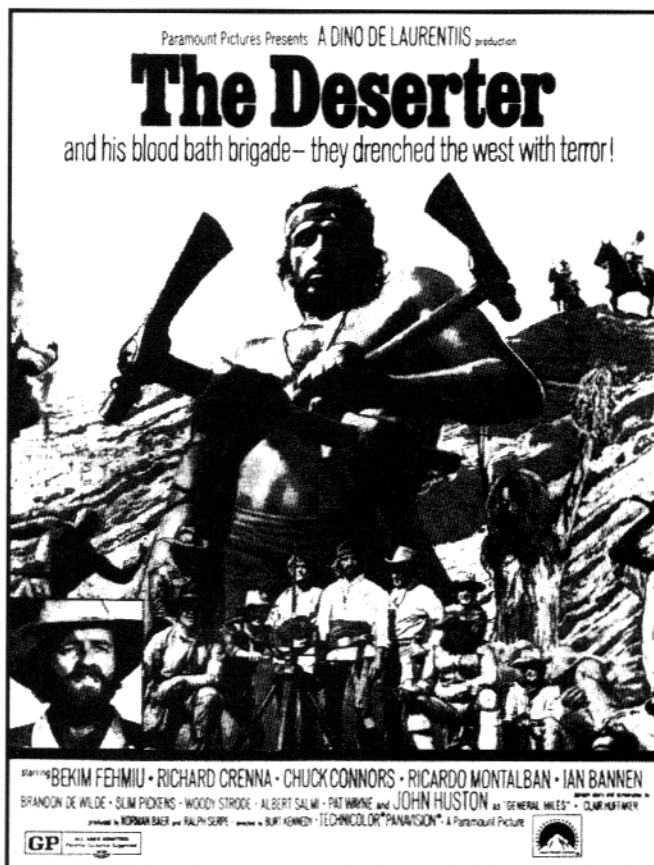
Now this is more like it. George Lazenby (prior to making his Kung Fu debut in *THE MAN FROM HONG KONG*) is John, an architect whose wife, Kate, is coming home from her stay at a rest home. John isn't exactly thrilled by her return as he is quite happy to continue to ball their best friend Marianne. Marianne wants Kate to know about her affair, but John is against the idea. Marianne is also curious as to what John was up to when he was speaking to Rosa, a hippie played by Chantal Contouri (*THIRST*). When Kate is left alone in her apartment while John is on a business trip, she invites Marianne over to keep her company. A dark figure also enters the building and things start becoming dangerous. This movie was made for Australian television and it displays all the stylistic and plotting conventions of a good Giallo. Try to catch it if you can, it's an intriguing thriller and only 74 minutes long.

FURIOUS (1981). "Mystic Aliens fight Karate Heroes for control of the Universe." That sounds pretty exciting now, doesn't it? "Filmed Entirely in Hollywood, NOT DUBBED." Now ain't that something, did you ever hear of such a thing? Written, produced and directed by Thomas Satorio and Tim Everitt. Remember these names. Simon Rhee stars as Simon, a karate teacher. His sister was killed by 3 Mongolians chasing her over a hill in the pre-credit sequence. She died so that the Mongolians could take a Tusk/Compass from her. Epic orchestral music signals every major point of this zero budget drama. Simon speaks to his Master, who explains to him that his sister was merely "paying her karmic debt." Mind you, in the room next door, there sits a chicken. A fight erupts at a Chinese restaurant and we hear the sounds of matches being broken with every blow delivered. A gun is fired but no sound issues. Waiters wearing Kabuki masks serve Simon a plate with the heads of two friends on it. At the Karate school, the Master's henchman shoots flames from his arm which turn people into chickens!! When Simon does battle with him and his flame hits a mirror he is turned into a piglet!!! And then the piglet proceeds to tell Simon the story, with his dying breath?!! If I mention the electronic band wearing karate costumes and playing in the classroom it might confuse you. So I'll let you work out what it all means. I'm going to have a nap now, thank you.

KEITH BREESE/RAYO CONSTANTINOPLE; Aurora, CO.

THE WHITE GLOVES OF THE DEVIL (1987?). A decidedly obscure French crime film that attempts to mimic the Italian crime ("guts-and-glory") films, like those by Fernando Di Leo and Umberto Lenzi. But, mon ami, our French compatriots can only hint at the brilliance of the Italians and this film attests to that. We get very minimal action (most being so ineptly edited and shot that bullets arc out of guns from impossible angles, and men are shot down with mere auditory 'bangs' as no blood is ever spilled) and the plot is as listless as a Miles Deem western.

THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO SATAN (1972). This is Renato Polselli's (*DELIRIUM*, *REINCARNATION OF ISABEL*) rarest 'seen' film; his unseen film being *MANIA* (1973). This flick is, like his others, a bizarre amalgamation of sex and violence, as a young suicidal man, Reubert, drives his girlfriend (Rita Calderoni) insane and she is forced to kill him. Ahh, but our murderess has been seen by a peeping-tom psycho who is determined to blackmail her. The peeping-tom forces Calderoni to submit with his every whim and fancy, and it seems she cannot escape. Then comes the twist: Is Reubert really dead? This is a typical Polsellian feature with a whirlpool of sex (some of it hardcore), strange psychedelic lights, thumping bass and religious Freudian delirium. And no, it is not available anywhere on video. No bootlegs exist...Nada...Zippo...Zilch.



an officer is forced to pick a motley crew of nuts, maniacs and at least one religious freak, to go behind enemy lines and cause all hell to break loose. If they succeed, their prison or death sentences will be cut short. Of course, this theme has been well-covered in *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN*, *THE DIRTY DOZEN* and many others. Bekim Fehmiu (*THE ADVENTURERS*) plays Capt. Kaleb, a cavalryman whose wife is skinned alive by Apaches. He blames the army for not posting guards at the mission she was stationed at, so he becomes "the deserter" and takes to the desert for some Apache scalps. Two years later, the military wants to make a deal. If Kaleb will lead a group of men behind enemy lines and take out an army of armed Apaches, they'll forget that he shot Officer Richard Crennan during a somewhat heated conversation. He reluctantly accepts, picks his men, and what a bunch they are — Riccardo Montalban and Slim Pickens (the scouts), Chuck Connors (dynamite expert and religious nut), Woody Strode (bridge builder), Ian Bannen (English officer on loan), Albert Salmi (racist nut), Patrick Wayne (Gatling Gun expert), and Brandon de Wilde (young buck). Next, we go through the motions — intense training, internal fighting, the long journey, et cetera. Sure, it's clichéd, but that's the fun, since you know most of the boys are going to buy the farm doing something heroic. Fehmiu is usually lambasted for giving wooden performances, but in this picture his stoic actions are perfect, because Kaleb is supposed to be a man who has lost his soul. The rest of the gang chew up the scenery like wild coyotes, and even John Huston gets to act rebellious. The action scenes below the Mexican border are truly kinetic and Kennedy keeps the pace at a nice rumble. If you're a fan of the "overwhelming odds"-type action movie, this one's for you.

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO ROCK (1976). At the beginning of this rock 'n' roll fable we are informed that in the late-'70s, all rock performances will be banned on British television. Our hero has other plans, as he roams the English countryside looking for the world's greatest bands, so he can put together a "GLAMMED OUT" concert to overthrow Big Brother, or something to that effect. Our hero is referred to as "our hero," that's it. And how does he find these elusive beat combos? Well, he storms up and down desolate highways in the "Group Detector Van." I know this for sure, because on the side of the vehicle it actually reads "Group Detector Van!" Our hero has a driver called "Mr. Rockbottom," who mumbles to himself, is actually a spy for the UK telly-people, and continually tries lots of goofy ways to muck things up for you-know-who. Is this flick of the same ilk as, say, *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT* or *HEAD?* Nope. Is it funny? Not really. Does the soundtrack deliver? Yes, indeed! The bands (Mud, The Glitter Band, The Rubettes, Slik) were all genuine superstars of the Glam Rock era, however they were more of the bubble-gum type, than of the artsy (Bowie) or Metallic (Sweet) groups. All said, there's an album's worth of tunes performed — actually lip-

APOCALYPSIS SEXUAL (1982). This is one of the last films by Carlos Aured, the Spanish horror-meister responsible for some of Paul Naschy's best pictures (*WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMEN*). As Spain was inundated with porn flicks (brought by Eurocine and the never-alooof Jess Franco (bless his heart)), the need for more on-screen sex was pushed further and further. Carlos Aured descended into the porno gutter with this outing, but he struggled to maintain an air of excitement missing in most European films of this era. The film details the travails of a kidnapped heiress and the thugs who took her. While the plot is hoary and the sex even hoarier, it is still a well-made film and Aured manages to generate some scenes of compelling action. And yes, there is a 'switchblade' sequence.

VINCENT CONSERVA; Garden City, NY.

THE DESERTER (1971). This is a film that fell into the void. Most film review guides dismiss it as being an overly violent oater, while spaghetti western fans are mostly indifferent due to the fact that the movie shows few signs of being European. Even though it is an Italian-Yugoslav production, it features a predominately US cast and American Burt Kennedy in the director's chair. The film is not dubbed and the zoom lens is held in check. The picture is of the Suicide Mission sub-genre. You know the drill —

A Film Flotsam Special:

A Trio of Sadistic Holiday Treats

by Howard S. Berger

John Hughes has come a long way since his fledgling days in Hollywood, directing clumsy, shambling, barely-socially relevant teen-comedies like *SIXTEEN CANDLES* (1984) and *THE BREAKFAST CLUB* (1985). I think it was the matter-of-fact amorality of *FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF* (1986) where it first dawned on me that, through the tonnage of blind ineptitude sat the makings of a bulbous, perverse satiric genius. Now that his desire to direct has waned a bit, passing off his recent screenplays to other, lesser known and lesser ego'ed directors, Hughes' satiric bulbosity has finally swelled to the max. His early '90's trio of delights (*HOME ALONE 2*, *DENNIS THE MENACE* and *BABY'S DAY OUT*) have proven Hughes to be the premier scenarist of religiously amoral, blissfully violent family satire. Shall we take a quick tour?

HOME ALONE 2 (1992).

Reprising the cast and director from the abysmal 1990 mega-hit, *HOME ALONE*, Hughes dares to repeat the course of action, but this time... EUREKA! It must have been like a massive lightning bolt striking him in the center of his brain, suddenly stirring those inert neurons that are used to create brilliance...A subtext! Why hadn't he done it before? Sitcom and gimmicks were his bag until now, but here it is — a big, fat, juicy, morally questionable subtext!

Let's quickly read into it: Pre-teen Kevin's Mom and Dad want to take the family on a Xmas vacation to Florida where they once spent an idyllic honeymoon some fifteen years earlier. Kevin gets lost in the airport and his parents realize, too late, that they have once again been criminally negligent while traveling with their children. Kevin scams his dad's credit card and proceeds to have a fantasy Christmas in New York City.

Fair enough. Now, the subtext: Xenophobia. An explicit fear or hatred of foreigners or all things foreign. How so?

1) While the family is confined to their cheesy Florida hotel room during a rainstorm, the only form of entertainment is watching *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* on TV dubbed into Spanish. Thus the ideal Florida vacation as well as Xmas has been transformed into a tacky, claustrophobic joke by the abundant Hispanic community.

2) The cantankerous thieves from the first film return to have their perfect crime, once again, foiled by precocious Kevin. They are personified by Joe Pesci (distinctly Italian) and Daniel Stern (distinctly Jewish). Both are also, next to WASP Kevin's craft and cunning, distinctly stupid.

3) The hotel director, here a nuisance and a nemesis of Kevin's, is portrayed as a blundering, effeminate British buffoon by actor/singer/embarrassment Tim Curry.

4) The magic of New York City at Christmas time is marred by the ugliness of growing poverty and, in turn, the hostile and apathetic personalities of the diverse ethnic population. However, there are two exceptions to this rule: the lonely Irish bag lady with a heart of gold, and Mr. Duncan, the eccentric toystore owner, both of whom befriend Kevin during his excursion.

5) Finally, it is the changing of the name of famed toystore F.A.O. Schwartz to Duncan's Toy Chest that is the film's most perverse claim: to actually rewrite the established ethnic history of NYC landmarks!

A fascinating dissertation of how foreigners have shattered the WASP "American Dream". And, obviously, the patented gratuitous "R"-rated comic carnage provides unceasing belly-busting delights.

DENNIS THE MENACE (1993).

Better directed and acted than *HOME ALONE 2*, Hughes' screenplay provides, not only grander, grislier guffaws, but a more potent, unsettling subtext as well: man/boy-slave/master love relationships! How so? Let's take a peek at the film's insightful opening sequence...

Mr. Wilson walks out of his suburban house one morning to retrieve the newspaper from his hedges. He hears the warning sounds of an approaching 5-year-old Dennis [continued on opposite page]

synched, and no one actually bothers to plug in their guitars either. As for the 'funny bits' in between the bands, well, you get people shooting each other with rubber dart guns, food fights, and the bizarre ritual of "scarf waving." If you thought England was a nutty little country before this, well it'll seem like another planet after viewing some of these escapades. I'm sure Benny Hill didn't lose any sleep...Having said all of this, I should say that I love this much-maligned period in rock history, and '70s England has a look that's truly all its own. So if you're searching for something that has some stomping tunes, outfits that were made out of grandma's curtains, and choreography that would give Toni Basil spasms, then this is for you. Peter Noone even shows up as a drill instructor with long hair! [Note: Midge Ure, the guitarist with Slik, went onto fame with the punk band The Rich Kids featuring ex-Sex Pistol Glen Matlock, and later joined alternative pioneers Ultravox.]

THE DRIVER (1978). The second feature to be written and directed by Walter Hill (the first being 1975's *HARD TIMES*) is a true classic. An existential, noir, action film that features some of the most spectacular car chases ever committed to celluloid. The plot is quite simple: Professional getaway driver (Ryan O'Neal) is pursued by manic cop (Bruce Dern). To them, the chase is the thrill, and the dialogue makes it quite clear that the protagonists consider their situation to be a game. Not one character in the film has a name, only a "title" (Driver, Cop) or moniker (Teeth, Glasses, etc.). Though originally intended as a vehicle for Steve McQueen (Hill wrote the screenplay for *THE GETAWAY*), O'Neal is very cool in the title role, Dern is weird is hell, and Isabelle Adjani is quite alluring. Fine support comes from Felice Orlandi, Matt Clark, Ronnee Blakely, and Rudy Ramos. A few films have been singled out for outstanding automotive thrills over the years — *TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.*, *THE SEVEN UPS*, *THE FRENCH CONNECTION*, and the big granddaddy *BULLITT*. It's about time *THE DRIVER* joins the ranks.

To break the driver,
the cop was willing to break the law.



RYAN O'NEAL • BRUCE DERN • ISABELLE ADJANI in a LAWRENCE GORDON PRODUCTION "THE DRIVER"
Co-Starring RONEE BLAKELY • Associate Producer FRANK MARSHALL • Produced by LAWRENCE GORDON
Written and Directed by WALTER HILL • Music MICHAEL SMALL • COLOR BY DeLUXE®
A Twentieth Century-Fox/EMI Films Presentation

TREASURE ISLAND...THE ADVENTURE BEGINS (1994). Somebody call Guinness, because this is the longest commercial in history! Very strange, it plays out like '90s-style Disney Fluff meets a "Come See Las Vegas" travel reel. Actually, according to this movie, Vegas only seems to exist within the confines of the Treasure Island and Mirage hotels! Our adventure begins when 12-year-old Robbie (Corey Carrier) and his parents hit Sin City for a two-day vacation. Mom is busy with business conventions and Dad is a lawyer who impersonates a wet blanket. This leaves youth Robbie to his own devices. First off, Robbie meets none other than Steve Winn himself in the lobby of the Treasure Island casino (Mr. Winn owns everything nailed down on the Strip...almost), who informs Robbie that his adventure is just beginning (I bet he says that to all of the losers at the blackjack tables too). Before you can say "Shiver me timbers," a painting of Long John Silver comes to life in the form of Anthony Zerbe! And if you think Anthony's title role in the rock 'n' roll opus *KISS MEETS THE PHANTOM OF THE PARK* is the actor's most bizarre role, wait until you see him as the grizzled swashbuckler, back from the dead! Anthony must've been comped for a year!...Long John starts calling Robbie "Jim Hawkins" and informs him that there is buried treasure under the Dunes hotel, and that it's to be imploded the next day. From this point on, it's travelogue time, as he rides a dolphin at The Mirage while a resurrected "Black Dog" gives chase, and there's even time for an acid trip at the "Mystere Circus"! The guys eventually take on "Black Dog" and his crew, and save the treasure before The Dunes comes

crashing down on their heads (actual footage of the hotel/casino being blown up). We even see Long John and Robbie mingle with the live pirate show outside the casino before they say their farewells. I don't know what effect this will have on a viewer if you've never been to Vegas, however I'm been there a total of five weeks in the last year-and-a-half, so that tells you where I'm coming from. If you've been to Vegas or if you're a Vegas nut you'll dig this simply because you won't believe what you're seeing. Make no mistake, this is a slick 47-minute production, which aired on network television in the 7 p.m. time-slot, back in 1994. Also, I think you can only buy this video at the casino gift shops. [Fact: Even though this all takes place in a casino, no one seems to gamble!]

KIM NEWMAN; London, England.

BLOOD SLAVES OF THE VAMPIREWOLF (1996). "This film is dedicated to the memory of Ed Wood," declares an all-too-apt caption. Between the credits of this shot-on-video fan-finish home movie, a visibly stiff rubber bat on an even more visible fishing line bobs through a graveyard. Amazingly, the quality declines from that point, as sub-amateur actors stumble at punitive length around cramped, makeshift sets and glare at each other while muffing clunky lines. Wood associate Conrad Brooks not only directs, but plays the mute minion of Selena Yarnell (Jennifer Knight), an old-time movie star turned vampire. Knight picks up an enormously obese horror film geek (writer Don Miller, in what one hopes is not an autobiographical role) and transforms him into a scraggle-bearded Tor Johnson-sized zombie who preys on hookers, while a British policeman (Michael Hooker) on an exchange scheme tries to bust the case, a concerned witness (Annette Perez) digs up the book of lore that explains the "cult of the moon drinkers" and a drained bag lady is resurrected as a green-faced slow-walking zombie. Hooker and Perez sneak into Knight's lair, and when Knight offers Hooker Brooks' job — because the frankly aging cockney is the double of her dead fiancé — Brooks turns on his mistress and blows up the house, which at least puts an end to the lengthy shots of characters wandering about what looks like the backstage area of a small theatre. "It's the end of a nightmare," drones Hooker, "they've blown themselves to Hell!" Some of the ineptitude — a misspelled sign on the wrong side of a morgue door — can be excused as homage to Wood, but even the auteur of *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* would never have considered this excruciating effort a proper film; the cack-handed rip-off aesthetic is closer to the contemptuous and contemptible Jerry Warren of *TEENAGE ZOMBIES*. Public domain snippets from the trailer of 1935's *WEREWOLF OF LONDON* constitute the nearest the film comes to professional quality, and Joe Estevez has a walk-on as himself.

DRACULA (1994). In a brief prologue, this porno movie gives two dates (1493, 1495) for the death of Vlad the Impaler, neither correct (it's 1496). Beginning with a cocktail-rider intended to cash in on *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*, this opens as if it will have some ambitions, with a dozen extras clashing swords in a mediaeval battle and quite elaborate costumes, but then swiftly degenerates into a series of loosely-strung sex scenes. The noble Vlad Dracula (Enzo Montefusco) is killed in battle, and his castle falls into the hands of some degenerate crusaders who enjoy torturing the innocent (with a graphic, heart-ripping H.G. Lewis effect) and, rather more conventionally, making a sex slave of Vlad's devoted widow, Elisabetta. She poisons herself, and Dracula's catafalque begins to bleed. Then, in "Bedford, London, 1887", Elisabetta turns up, passing herself off as 'Sandy' and invades a middle-class salon, converting a matron into a vampire who briefly does an *EXORCIST* vomiting act. A group of Englishmen and women visit Transylvania, mostly for sex with the locals and each other, but Sandy sacrifices them all to resurrect her husband, which makes this perhaps a prequel to Stoker's story along the lines of Raymond Rudorff's novel *The Dracula Archives*. Much of the sex is handled by the plump and unappealing X-rated veteran Ron Jeremy, who plays a lecherous and murderous coachman given to stabbing his forced conquests who finally gets what he deserves when, after a come-shot, he is fatally chewed by a vampire fellatrice. Director Mario Salieri has pretensions to style — the lighting, sets and costumes are aptly gothic, and the script shows none of the spoof tendencies of 1978's *DRACULA SUCKS!* — but is of the gynecological close-up school of pornographer, rarely managing even a diluted eroticism among the graphic sexual activity that litters this underplotted mini-epic.

SUCKER [a.k.a. Sucker: The Vampire] (1998). "They don't advertise for vampire henchmen in the newspapers," drones Reed Buckles (Alex Erkiletian), "only in special magazines, and then you don't know whether to believe the ad." Though it begins like any other low-budget vampire goth movie, with undead Anthony (Yan Birch) playing in the rock band Plasma and preying on groupies, while the vengeful Vanessa Helsing (Monica Baber) stalks his kind, this takes a weird direction by concentrating on the character of Reed, a bumbling but mostly sympathetic male nurse-cum-roadie who works as Anthony's Renfield, disposing of the drained female corpses in the hospital where he works — though not before he dresses them up in bondage gear for necrophile romances. The film takes another unpredictable turn when Anthony drinks HIV-infected blood and develops AIDS, which makes him reassess his attitudes and almost form a relationship with Reed, who crews his yacht to indulge his love of the sea, and inherits his fortune when the vampire sits out on deck to watch the sunrise and put an end to his misery, which enables him to take a round-the-world trip with a ditty lab technician who has a crush on him. Meanwhile, Vanessa returns from the grave as "the thing she hates most" and is vamped by Lenore, the white-clad queen vampire of Los Angeles. It suffers from a droning synthesizer score, makeshift supporting performances, dull exploitation elements (silicone breasts and spurting blood) and a drab straight-to-video look, but Birch is surprisingly good in the difficult sensitive suffering scenes and Erkiletian, while he overdoes the necrophile geekiness, is at least an original character.

on a tricycle. Instead of going back inside his home and locking the front door, Mr. Wilson jumps under the covers, pretending to be asleep. Dennis, predictably, enters the house and climbs aboard old Mr. Wilson, straddling him — prodding and poking him and finally, firing an aspirin tablet down his throat with a slingshot. Later, Wilson complains about the incident to Dennis' father, suggesting that a firm belt-whipping might straighten the boy out...

It is clear that Wilson enjoys Dennis' frequent attacks on him and that the completion of his pederastic abuse fantasy would be the ultimate scolding and physical punishment of the boy by his own parents.

Perverse and chilling as this all is, Dennis' subsequent torture and maiming of Mr. Wilson is screamingly funny. Watch as Dennis substitutes Drano for mouthwash and mouthwash for nasal decongestant. Laugh as Mr. Wilson uses them both and nearly burns his entire sinus cavity and esophagus from his body. Watch as Dennis playfully splashes soap suds over the bathroom floor. Giggle as Mr. Wilson (who has a hernia) does a 180 degree split on the floor and silently screams to the Heavens. Watch as Dennis tapes a thumbtack to the doorbell. Roar with hilarity as Mr. Wilson presses the button. Etc... All of this is ultimately rewarded by a great big, heart-felt hug from Mr. Wilson!



As a bonus, Dennis is also kidnapped by a decrepit derelict thief (played with casual familiarity by Christopher Lloyd). He binds the child with thick ropes and threatens him with molestation and murder. Dennis mocks the monster and instructs him on the proper way to tie up a little kid so that they can't run away, since they are so wiry and clever at that early age!

Another hilarious kick is where Dennis innocently sets the culprit ablaze after repeatedly bludgeoning his head with objects both blunt and sharp. I also dig the notation on the video box that explains that the film is rated "PG" for "comedic mischief."

An absolutely brilliant cranium-reconstructing comedy.

And lastly, but not leastly, the masterwork...**BABY'S DAY OUT (1994).**

The age of our hero has now retreated further back to that of an infant. Baby Bink is the object of everyone's attention in what might be the first comedy about "womb envy". *BABY'S DAY OUT* is an Homeric odyssey about three men and their search for lost innocence and femininity through the concentric circles of the Hell of male sexuality.

Baby Bink is the child of an ultra-wealthy WASP Chicago couple (*BIG SURPRISE*). The Mother demands that a photo be taken of her child for the society pages of the local newspaper. The photographers, however, turn out to be kidnappers who take the baby, then spend the rest of the film running after him as he drags them on a harrowing tour of the city after he escapes their clutches time and again.

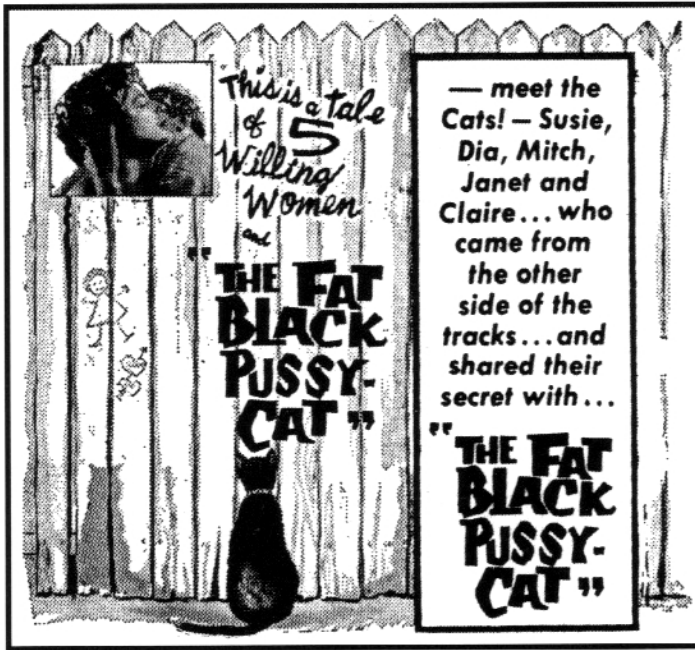
The kidnappers are put through the Freudian dream-logic torture mill as they are forced to repeatedly fall from great heights (rooftops, construction sites = symbols of male potency), get mauled by a protective, motherly Gorilla (a symbol of primal masculinity that is, ironically, completely in touch with its' feminine side), and, of course, suffer repeated attacks on their own sexual organs by Binky himself.

Baby Bink Hijink Highlight: an expression-obliterating eleven-minute sequence where the baby's tiny hand first crushes the testicles of his kidnapper, then proceeds to set it on fire with a lighter. Blinding laughter ensues when the other kidnappers try to put out the billowing flames by stomping on the afflicted area with their heavy workboots.

Hughes wisely pushes the shallow, self-centered parents out of the picture and hones in on the fantastic pursuit for Bink by the kidnappers, who become more sympathetic and humble with each additional abuse they fall victim too. This is a comedy about men who aren't much of anything transforming into a whole of something else. The sheer glee and degree of brutality in the gags successfully functions as an aggressively demented oxygen vacuum. A breathlessly hysterical comedy of emasculation and transition... Happy Holidays.

PAUL FREITAG; Chicago, IL.

THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT (1964). Any movie that opens with a nude woman stumbling down a dark alley to her death is certainly on the right track, and this beatnikploitation murder mystery certainly has a lot going for it in terms of timepiece value. Frank James stars as a detective investigating the opening demise by checking out the young woman's frequent hangout, the title hipster establishment run by a guy who looks more like Vic Tayback. He can tell the poets from the bums because the poets have "soulful eyes." He runs into trouble, however, because he can't speak hip and needs every other sentence translated into English despite the fact that, as he says, "some of my best friends are existentialists." The hipsters spout poetry, have goatees and don't care about the investigation ("I heard she got attacked by a sex fiend. Ain't that a laugh?") and the detective's job is made infinitely difficult. He shouldn't worry too much, however, because the killer turns out to be someone who isn't even in the film until the end! We also get our hero at a dinner party (featuring Hector Elizondo) where a psychologist tries to convince him he doesn't like steak, only the idea of steak, and priceless bits of beatnik dialogue ("That's Albert. Boy, is that Albert." "Envy, man...strictly nowhere'sville."). Blink and you'll miss a young Geoffrey Lewis attacking the detective in the park. The music is by the Don Bader group, whom I've never heard of, but whose bongo-laden tracks provide the perfect accompaniment for such a sampling of pretentious exploitation at its best. Like most movies of this sort, the fast-talking characters and too-cool-for-its-own-good dialogue get old fast, and it lacks sleaze after the opening credits, but it's still an entertaining timepiece perfect for a coffee-sipping, beret-wearing, finger-snapping double feature with *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*.



AT TWILIGHT COME THE FLESHEATERS (1998). You don't have to be gay to enjoy gay porn, and in the case of this 112-minute(!) epic, it probably helps if you're not. Part character-driven comedy, part *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* parody, this seems specifically designed to irritate those looking for a quick spurt. Writer-director Vidkid Timo stars as Digiorno, a flaming Anthony Edwards-look-alike getting together a movie party; the movie in question being a porn version of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* that opens with Barbara (Timo again) giving her brother a blowjob on their mother's grave. Back in, er, "reality," Digiorno pisses off a credit collector (a real woman) who yelps loudly about that "stupid fag-ass motherfucker" and posts his phone number all over New York. Digiorno's ex-boyfriend Elusion shows up and the two of them wander around and talk. And talk. And talk. Meanwhile, Digiorno's current boyfriend chops scallions. After a penis piercing (in gleeful close-up) and a brief leather sequence involving a lad trapped in a cage, Elusion takes a dump and sticks in a butt-plug. Digiorno continues to get prank calls all night from various transvestites, leathermen and even a lettuce-fetishist rubbing his cock with salad tongs ("Do you like romaine? Iceberg?"). Back in the movie-within-the-movie, zombies attack the siblings ("He's eating me while he fucks me!") and Jean Cooper looks and acts like a lost Divine character, slapping Barbara silly and finally getting killed when her daughter (who inexplicably lapses into Spanish) repeatedly stabs her with a blowdryer. The NOTLD segments are surprisingly close to the original, and it's a shame there's not more of them. The sex bits seem to be a random sampling of fetishistic gay culture (voyeurism, S&M, shaving) never stopping on one sex scene long

enough to satisfy someone looking for standard porn and, in fact, the first sex scene isn't until a full half-hour into the film. The lead character never gets laid(!) and ends up with his life in ruins. 33 cast members and 4 animals are credited, along with a "Special thanks" to George Romero, who no doubt would be pleased that a brief clip from his film makes it into this one.

ONE AWAY (1976). Dean Stockwell and Bradford Dillman were well-teamed as Leopold and Loeb in *COMPULSION*, but few people are aware they reunited 17 years later for this Australian-produced, South African-set biker flick. Dillman and Stockwell play Gypsy brothers (though Dillman's character owns a bike shop) whose third sibling, Tam (Patrick Mower), is in prison for killing the man who raped his girlfriend, and whose escape opens the film. The two team up with "house-dweller" Elke Sommer in order to aid in his escape. The escaping Tam keeps having flashbacks of Dillman ("Our people aren't meant to be caged up! You'll die in here") and an older co-conspirator whose advice ("Don't run! Let them do the running!") he constantly ignores. Things go typically wrong, as Tam gets injured and fails to get to his meeting spot on time and ends up lost. Meanwhile, the soft-spoken Stockwell gets seduced by Tam's wife, and the law closes in. It plays like an uneven mixture of typical biker road movie (Dillman and Sommer), family drama (Stockwell) and dingy Italian jungle horror flick (Tam) as things get progressively worse and, in typical exploitation fashion, never get better. Dillman's at his best (not saying much), though the sub-plot involving his relationship with Sommer seems terribly out-of-character for an otherwise mean-spirited, self-consumed jerk. The film's centerpiece is a 15-minute chase where the three brothers ride in different directions to distract the police and crashes ensue all over the place. Eventually, Dillman and Stockwell get captured while Tam escapes, and everyone's pretty miserable. While the direction's pretty pedestrian and gets sidetracked by sub-plots a little too often, *ONE AWAY* is an occasionally interesting cross-breed of genres that's grungy and humorless enough to be worth a look, and the Gypsy angle is one I hadn't seen before. It was filmed in South Africa, but except for the leads, all the accents are Aussies. Director Sidney Hayes is best known for *CIRCUS OF HORRORS* and *BURN, WITCH, BURN!* and was relegated to directing for TV shortly after this.

STRAIGHT UP (1989). If you've ever wondered where your tax dollars went during the '80s, you need only check out this U.S. Department of Education-funded classroom scare film featuring TV-drama regular Chad Allen. A puffy-haired Allen plays a normal middle school kid hanging around a parking garage(?) when he stumbles across four schoolmates (white guy, black guy, Asian girl, fat kid) drinking beer and smoking pot. After being shunned by his peers for not giving into their pressure, he meets a white-robed Louis Gossett, Jr. (can you say "community service?") as "Cosmo," who bursts into a horribly lame song-and-dance number while taking Allen for a ride on his "Fate Elevator" complete with "Dr. Who"-level special effects. Cosmo then lends him a glowing headband of knowledge and lets him off at an Escher-inspired dungeon-like floor of cardboard sets where he comes across the personification of booze. Booze, a stumbling hobo with slurred speech, who later appears as a clown, attacks him with a chainsaw and tries to steal the headband with the help of Pot, a crazy-eyed Carol Kane wannabee who resembles a plastered Statue of Liberty with joints in her hair. The pair cause Allen to be left hanging over a pit of snakes, but after a brief musical duet, he's saved by the headband, whose knowledge allows him to escape them and trap them with Cocaine (a frantic, white-haired woman who resembles a giant poodle) and Heroin (a tall, skinny pale punker with double mohawks who only has one line). Tragically, hallucinogenics don't even manage a cameo. Two similar episodes follow, as Cosmo instructs Allen to spread the word, but can't convince his peers to stop drinking in the middle of a video store. All the "bad" kids (including Scott Nemes, of *IT'S GARRY SHANDLING'S SHOW*) get sick and cough, but Allen manages to save one of 'em, anyway. Add in some laughable animation sequences, more awful musical numbers ("Reservation for One" in particular makes any given *VOYAGE OF THE ROCK ALIENS* number sound like prime Bowie), random "facts" ("Only five out of every hundred kids experiment with drugs"), magical glasses that allow you to see things soberly, ever-lengthening recaps of previous segments and more reprises of Gossett's "Take the Elevator Up" song than you'd ever want to expose humanity to, and you've got the sort of horrifying waste of taxpayer funds that could have only been produced during the Reagan administration. I picked this up for 99 cents at a Blockbuster, where it's a free rental in their "Community Service" section.

SEAN McELROY; Springfield, IL.

UNA AVENTURA LLAMADA MENUDO [An Adventure Called Menudo] (1981). I believe there's nothing more bewildering than another country's pop culture, and nothing defines that more for me right now than this whacked-out early-80's *MENUDO* vehicle. Opening with a startling series of electronic bleeps in lieu of a theme song, this tells the story of the Mexican singing group's disappearance on a desert island during a routine hot air balloon ride. The action is periodically interrupted with short clips of crudely-rendered animation, a device that gets increasingly surreal as the story progresses. As the quintet aimlessly wan-

GENE SUICIDE; Brooklyn, New York.
HOMEBOY (1988).

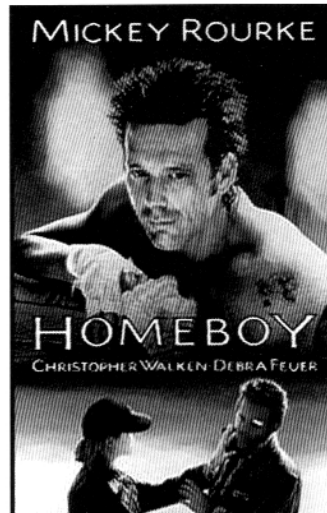
You wouldn't expect much from *HOMEBOY*'s rather uninspired video box, but I was left in stunned silence. This is a one of a kind motion picture that goes so far as to call forth from me a series of outspoken depositions that will most certainly alienate me from my video store pals and every movie buff I know. On numerous occasions, my flame baited demands for the recognition of *HOMEBOY*'s lower class compassion and virulently deductive street logic were greeted with laughter by those now dead set against ever taking me seriously again: "It's better than *RAGING BULL*, can't you see!"

But if I cared, I wouldn't be writing this, would I? *HOMEBOY* is that endearingly unassuming diamond in a quagmire of muted compromise that, above all else, rewards you for taking a chance on it when by all odds it could've been nothing more than the late-'80s fluff it appears to be. It's the kind of film that makes you wonder how many other small miracles of mainstream cinema are being missed in the wake of the DVD apocalypse. *HOMEBOY* is not surprisingly Seresin's only film released to date, and so very quietly boasts what is probably Mickey Rourke's greatest performance. His brave turn as a confused, uneducated, and alcoholic societal misfit is certainly unique in every way, and its unheralded sincerity is as depressing as the film itself. It also makes bland, overrated hacks like Daniel Day Lewis, Ralph Fiennes and Tom Hanks look like, well, bland overrated hacks.

A magnificently sleazy, downbeat score by Eric Clapton starts to accurately define *HOMEBOY*'s temperament from the first scene, in which Johnny Walker (Rourke) steps off a Greyhound in a very cold looking late night downpour. He walks with his head down, wears an enormous cowboy hat, tight old blue jeans, and a pair of filthy shitkickers. The scene initially appears clichéd, as do several others in the film, but it pulls together fast, like congealed blood, as we see more of Rourke's harshly convincing character. He's a failing boxer from Texas, orphaned at a young age by a father who died of an alcohol overdose and a mother who was "fuckin' nuts." He apparently never made it to the fifth grade, living as a teen in reform schools. Poverty followed him into adulthood, along with his father's dipsomania. His only means of financial support is boxing, which he was never properly trained for. His skill in the ring is erratic, marred by poor physical shape, a cracked temporal bone, and a total lack of respect for the rules of the sport. A few victories

have brought him to an eastern seaside town for a lightweight boxing match, where he meets petty crook and scoundrel Wesley Pentegrass (played with true idiosyncratic oddball enthusiasm by the one and only Christopher Walken). Wesley promotes the fights, dreams of ripping off Hassidic Jew diamond dealers, and performs a spectacularly awful nightclub act (one of the most brazenly funny things I've ever seen). A romantic interest is ponderously developed, but it works it spite of its obviousness, and is the only thing which anchors Johnny and the film from plunging deep into an unremittent nihilism that few could bear. The female lead, Debra Feuer, is stunningly cute but her acting rarely manages to overcome the hammy role she's stuck with. Her boardwalk mini-amusement park is failing and the merry-go-round hasn't worked in years. Most of her lines are of the typical "dame in distress"/"poor girl with a good cause" ilk: "I have to save the horses, Johnny. They make me happy." But its clumsiness aside, the film desperately needs her element. Even in off-center moments like this one, she is likable and it's not hard to see past the momentary hokiness. These are real people with real hopes, and you want to see them get somewhere as much as you know they probably won't.

More gut-wrenching than any of *HOMEBOY*'s sadistic fight scenes is the simple difficulty Rourke displays when trying to express to Walken his affection for this girl, probably the first real chance he's had in his life. As he gestures in frustration with half raised arms, in a struggle to understand something that is not cruel, that is not ugly or corrupt or painful, he is hesitant and unsatisfied with his confession to the crass, bullshit philosophizing swine sitting next to him. His words are small and don't go very far in and of themselves, yet they reveal everything he is feeling with solid honesty: "I just wish I could just have her, and have her touch me, and like me." Corny as hell in print, granted. But the impact of the dignity Rourke gives these words resonates with the shock of true recognition. It's a scene to be revered, a film moment that will never be repeated so piercingly raw, simply



because of the courage it took his character to say something so childlike, yet so honest in a world of apathetic shit.

There's another scene of considerable power, an episode in a back alley bar, where Johnny is the only Caucasian in sight. By the time he's blind drunk, swilling from a bottle of whiskey and openly pouring the pork in a rude dry fuck tango to one of their women on the bar, the caustic stares of the black patrons have given way to laughter and acceptance. Where there should have been some violent racial offense, a rare and genuine exchange of understanding takes place.

Seresin and Rourke (who received a story credit) seem to have this same understanding for

the underdog, the loser, the miscreant. There's everything in Johnny Walker to repulse or alienate us, from his foul disposition, drunkenness, and self destructive lunacy, to his childish behavior and shrunken intellect. But despite this, a respect for human pride is aggressively shown for him, letting his own trampled ideals shine through, taking on all the urgency and importance of our own. And to me, such an accomplishment is worth ten times the recognition of any so-called landmark film you'll see on some pompous critic's top ten list. Ironically, and like most other films with a grain of real worth, this was denied a theatrical release. When you think about it, that's patently offensive, and should instill in you a resentment of every well-known mainstream icon who has been given the chance and the backing to perfect his or her own dressed up but thoroughly vapid art, their heartless critical triumphs. I hope Michael Seresin makes another film someday, and for now, I hope this one gets another look. *HOMEBOY* shows heaps of gritty promise, assurance of some unknown greatness, and more heart than the last 20 years of Scorspielbrick mastery.

Mutterings of "BLASPHEMER!" echo through the halls. Yeah, I can hear you film zealots screaming. For now, silence in the back rows, please. Go see HOMEBOY. [Note: Watch for the compellingly scummy white blues rocker Willy DeVille, as Walken's smack addict toadie. I got a huge kick out of this, and if you're familiar with DeVille's lore, you will too.]

der through a series of nonsensical set pieces by day, they spend their nights sleeping in people's backyards. Eventually, they befriend a trio of pre-teen girls that seem to show up whenever it's time for another song & dance number — the contrived randomness of the sequences resemble *MENUDO* porn (even their chintzy electro-funk sounds suspiciously close to early-'80's porn music, only with vocals). After a while, the story starts to become sort of an *EYES WIDE SHUT* for tykes — each member of *Menudo* haphazardly falls into a potential tryst with an island local, only to be 'cock blocked' by another member (the 'other' perhaps representing the morality of the *MENUDO* collective consciousness). It's hard to tell one way or another — the movie is in Spanish with no subtitles. After 90 minutes of the same scenarios repeated ad nauseum, *MENUDO* are unceremoniously rescued by a helicopter that drops them off at a...*MENUDO* concert! It's hard to imagine a more uneventful adventure movie that's as inexplicably sinister on the edges (including several shots of promotional *MENUDO* materials featuring different members than the stars of this movie — now that's downright spooky), but hey, I sat through it so now you don't have to.

DEATH DRUG (1983). This hastily slapped-together amalgam of a scrapped late-'70's TV movie, "avant garde" video collage, improvised filler, and an excruciating mid-'80's music video is easily my pick for the most intense jolt of pure "freak-out" I've seen this year. *DEATH DRUG* stars a pre-*MIAMI VICE* Philip Michael Thomas as aspiring musician Jesse, a "shooting star" who oily A&R guys call the "next Donna Summer." While celebrating getting signed at a local watering hole, Jesse is turned onto angel dust by a white collar dealer, who describes

it eloquently as "the stick with kick, the tower of power — coated end-to-end with the juice." Within minutes, Jesse starts slappin' his wife around and hallucinating snakes, spiders and guys in dime-store Halloween masks. While film segments chronicle Jesse's downfall, sporadic video "newsreel" footage (obviously shot many years later) document his rise to fame with all the production values of South American snuff. The relentless creepiness reaches a fever pitch at the halfway point with the showing of a mid-'80's Philip Michael Thomas music video — as lasers shoot out of his head, Thomas dances the "robot" while superimposed over the stomach of a pregnant woman (all the while showing the sexual charisma of Chris Michael's "Creeper" character). Meanwhile, as Jesse's addiction spirals out of control, he begins suffering from visions that are easily as disturbing as anything from *THE SHINING* — one in particular (demonic mugging from special guests The Gap Band) has had me sleeping with the lights on. When Jesse finally dies, *DEATH DRUG* ends with a bizarre, apparently unscripted "interview" with Jesse's publicist — a character that doesn't even appear in the rest of the movie. I'm not sure what director Oscar Williams was trying to accomplish with *DEATH DRUG* — at any given moment, it's anti-drug propaganda, sordid family melodrama, *OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE*-style alternate future hokum, and shameless promotion of Philip Michael Thomas's attempted music career. Regardless, it's a worthy addition to the world of PCP cinema (a genre that includes both the somber TV-movie *ANGEL DUST* and Rudy Ray Moore's eternal *DISCO GODFATHER*) and has more thrills and laughs than a poorly assembled Tilt-a-Whirl.

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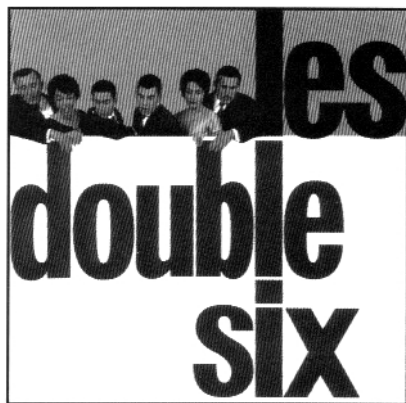
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SHARP RELIEF

by TAVIS
RIKER

From within our air-conditioned coffin comes the latest 'globally warmed' edition of 'Sharp Relief'. This might be termed our 'nostalgia' column, as most of the material this time out is firmly rooted in past selections/themes, all near and dear to our artificially cooled hearts.

Way back in our first column, we covered the mind-boggling, globetrotting spectacle that was **Raquel Welch's** first TV special. That one-of-a-kind combo of exotic locales, painful renditions of current pop hits, and kick-ass guest stars like Tom Jones (!) and John Wayne (?) definitely delivered the goods, and had nothing to compare. That is, until a rare late-'60s all-music special starring - **Brigitte Bardot!** Yes, **SPECIAL BARDOT** is an awesome musical hour, shown on New Year's Eve 1968, of Bardot and friends cavorting around various 'Scopitone'-styled sets, crooning le Pop Musique! And when those friends include Claude Bolling, Claude Brasseur and Serge Gainsbourg, you know you're in for a solid 60 of French lounge pop par excellence. Especially hilarious is Brigitte singing phonetically 'en Anglais', with phrasing from Planet X! We're treated to 'Le Saloon Schmoë' Sacha Distel crooning in his finest Matt Helm tuxedo, or dueting with Brigitte in 'le jam Psychedelique', complete with sitar! There's also some hot travelogue action as Brigitte hitches a parasailing ride in the South of France, and a jaw-dropping 'electronique' op-art number, with Bardot in Barbarella mode. But it's Bardot's duets with Serge Gainsbourg that really up the lounge ante. First there's "Comic Strip", a chart hit for Bardot/Gainsbourg, with Serge brooding away while Brigitte provides sound effects like "BANG!" "SCHBOOM" and "POW"-in a superhero outfit and black wig! But when the "Leonard Cohen of France" checks in with a "Bonnie and Clyde" themed-duet, you'd better get your Gitanes/black turtleneck/beret action in gear! The most refreshing aspects of "Special Bardot" are: a) no attempts at 'plot' or 'segues' are made -- it's just a free-form hour of music with the occasional scenic boat cruise down the Seine or 'Blow-Up' style photo shoots, and b) Bardot is a far less pretentious and far more 'down-to-earth' sex symbol than the over-hyped and 'enhanced' versions we get today. Viva Brigitte!

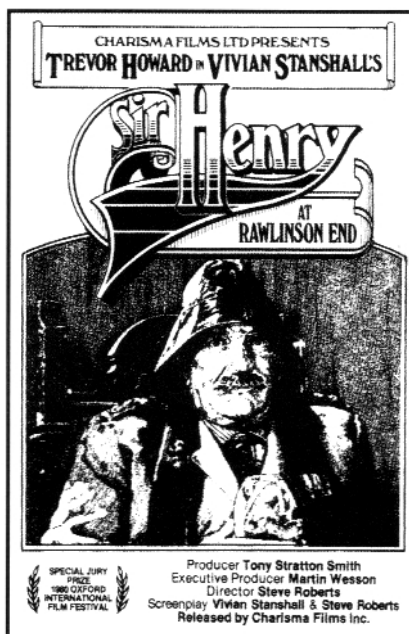


While we're 'En France', let us hip you to the most pleasant surprise in the 'jazz reissue vault' Dep't. For those who doubt that France has the most musical of languages (and is the most dubious in

their choice of cinematic icon), get ready for the stunning "Les Doubles Six" (RCA/BMG Classics) with their self-titled compilation CD. They are, in our (my) opinion, the greatest vocal group in the history of Jazz. Most of these recordings were done in 1959-1960, when what are now Jazz standards, originally performed by non-singing groups led by Lee Morgan, Gerry Mulligan or Miles Davis were chart-topping hits in France. You haven't heard vocal interpretations of these tunes until "The Six" wise you with their mind-blowing arrangements (many by Quincy Jones) and 'solos' (leader Mimi Perrin would transcribe the solos, write lyrics to match, and the group delivers it all with mellifluous power and maximum swing). For all those hepcats who want a swingin' walk on the wild side, you'd better jump back and dig the reissue of the year, daddy-o!

Still in the reissue department, but back at the VCR (or, for you media moguls, the DVD player), Rhino Video has restored one of the greatest TV showcases for classic bebop performances on **JAZZ CASUAL**, hosted by professorial jazz critic Ralph J. Gleason on San Francisco's KCET. These shows gave us a chance to see some of the best jazz combos of the early 60's in lengthy (for TV) 2 or 3-song sets. These B&W shows were certainly a big influence on subsequent non-hyped "let the musicians play" shows like NBC's Night Music and PBS's current "Sessions at West 54th". The first group of shows include such Jazz luminaries as Dizzy Gillespie, Cannonball Adderly, and Sonny Rollins (with Jim Hall). Now, when they release the episode featuring the 'My Favorite Things'-era John Coltrane Quintet, you can color me satisfied.

Although they've received their share of coverage in the past couple of years, the British band **Radiohead** have certainly emerged as an amazing live act, and the rockumentary **MEETING PEOPLE IS EASY** (Capitol) brings us on the road as the band trudges through their "OK Computer" tour. Director Grant Gee obviously loves Euro-style art films, and the result is kind of GIMME SHELTER meets Wim Wenders. From gig the first to gig the last, we get a kaleidoscopic view of life with Radiohead, with the emphasis on the daily grind, as the rock press ask the band the same questions worldwide, only slower if English is a second language. We get snippets of soundchecks and frenetic concert footage (watch out for seizures during the strobe light mayhem!), but only as part of the film proper, avoiding a 'concert movie' vibe. Of course, the big question is "will a non-fan of Radiohead get anything out of this?". Well, probably not. But if you have any interest in, or want



to be introduced to, the primo 'whiny space rock' that is Radiohead, you can't go wrong with **MEETING PEOPLE IS EASY**.

In a recent column we raved about the acquisition of some episodes of **RUTLAND WEEKEND TELEVISION**, featuring Eric Idle and Bonzo Dog Band alumnus Neil Innes. Now, landing squarely in the "What the Fuck?" Dep't. comes fellow Bonzo bandmate the late **Vivian Stanshall's SIR HENRY AT RAWLINSON END**. If you're looking for white-hot action that delivers Trevor Howard in a tutu on a unicycle, then consider your quest at an end. Based on Stanshall's musical play about various madmen / women (including Mr. Howard as the aforementioned Sir) and their servants

and friends on an estate in the English countryside, this Steve Roberts-directed effort will have even the most confirmed Anglophile in permanent head-scratching mode. Also featured is Patrick "more wine?" Magee, who has the classic line "I have a macrocosmic view of things temporal" (after looking the wrong way through binoculars). The constant voice-over narration is classic Bonzo-speak, a mixture of Edward Lear-styled whimsy and daily trivia. The only film that comes to mind in comparison is Richard Lester's **THE BED SITTING ROOM**, adding a fair share of 'chemical inspiration'. Brought to us by the film division of Charisma Records, whose consumption of Bushmills and speed no doubt led to such wacked green lights as **SIR HENRY AT RAWLINSON END**. Bless you.

Keeping it real in the 'CD' dep't., notable new releases include "Oar" (**Sundazed**), the reissued lost masterpiece by ex-Moby Grape frontman **Alexander 'Skip' Spence**. Recorded in 1969 following a stint in Bellevue after a druggy freakout in NYC, its mixture of psychedelia (again!), gutbucket blues, sound effects, et cetera, answers the magic question "where did Beck come up with all his stuff?" — pick up "Oar" and find out. In fairness, Beck, Tom Waits and others appear on the inevitable tribute album "More Oar"...After our recent rave of "Dead Bees on a Cake" by David Sylvian, we want to hip you to his ex-Japan/Rain Tree Crow bandmates, who are now "JBK" and have a great new CD called "...ism" (**Medium**). A unique combo of electronics, subsonic bass (courtesy the amazing Mick Karn) and cool pop style. Add guests like guitarist David Torn and vocalist Zoe Niblett and you've got a top-notch art rock record. We'll slide in a quick "thumbs up" for **Gomez's** brilliant "Liquid Skin" album for our herbolically-inclined friends out there, and lastly a heartfelt R.I.P. to a favorite of ours here at Sharp Relief, Oliver Reed.

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UNDERGROUND ODDITIES

DEBBIE DOES DAMNATION (1999).

[Sub-Vision Films, 4000d W. Magnolia Blvd, Burbank, CA 91505]

With this 50-minute epic, Eric Brummer continues to prove he's one of the most innovative and twisted underground filmmakers working today. Combining gruesome imagery, fantasy, stop-motion animation, and good old-fashioned sex, he even overcomes the fact that everything looks like it was filmed in his apartment. Shot in (intentionally) grainy black-and-white, Brummer combines live-action with crude, but lovably excessive claymation, and is never afraid to indulge in a rude joke. Unlike some of his more experimental shorts, this even has a discernible plot! Following a kick-ass intro featuring some after-life cannibalism and a talking skull with spider-like legs, we meet poor Debbie (Jenine Lake), who discovers she's not only in Hell, but naked. Confronting various predatory demons, courtesy of Brummer's home-made animation, this "Chosen One" makes a deal with the Devil in order to win her freedom. All she has to do is retrieve Satan's missing horns, which were stolen by two renegade disciples, Klegor (performance artist/musician Dukey Flyswatter, of Haunted Garage infamy) and Tansior (Brummer's long-time friend William Smith!). During this surreal, half-baked storyline, we get naked women chopping themselves to bits with swords; a monster that appears repeatedly, simply to rip a character's head off; and hilariously low-grade battle scenes, as factions attempt to take over Hell. There's even an appearance by RED SPIRIT LAKE-auteur Charles Pinion, who gets sliced in half. Meanwhile, Big Bill Smith hams it up with home-made cardboard armor and thick eye shadow, in what has to be his lowest-budgeted gig (and that's really saying something). Described by Brummer as his "tame" version, I can imagine the on-screen sex getting more graphic, but I think it would've only slowed down the pace. In addition, this tape includes a hilariously self-deprecating "making of" short, in which Brummer proudly divulges his cost-cutting secrets. Armed with imagination to spare, as well as easy-on-the-eyes actresses who were willing to roam about in the buff, this takes simple Super-8 to its extreme.



PIG (1999).

[Open Eye Productions, P.O. Box 461556, LA, CA 90046; \$20]

This stark, B&W short has little in way of story, but instead, relies on director Nico B's filmmaking savvy and often startling imagery. Of particular interest to Goth-fanatics, this not only stars, but was scored by Christian Death-founder Rozz Williams (who committed suicide in April '98). It begins when a faceless psycho (Williams) leaves a corpse in his wake (with the word 'PIG' carved into their chest), and heads into the desert wilderness on an abstract, dialogue-free journey. Hauling a gauze-faced victim along for the ride, our lead sadist strings the guy up and goes to work on his oddly-passive target. It's harsh, all right, as the killer slowly pierces nipples and the penis, carves up the arms and chest, and once the leather mask goes on, all bets are off -- with some moments leaving even myself a bit twitchy. The

antithesis of Feel-Good Cinema, Williams' industrial soundtrack definitely fits the material, even if the result is a bit empty. Mixing the experimental with the exploitative, this touches on dark avenues of human nature, but ultimately, never delves beyond the surface. Digging as deep as one can in only 22-minutes, it's a frustratingly slight yet beautifully crafted dose of cinematic disorientation.

THE MUTILATION MAN (1999).

[Andrew Copp, P.O. Box 081, Dayton, Ohio 45404-0081; \$19.95 + \$3 s&h]

The freshman feature from writer-director Andrew Copp follows in the extremely large, surrealist footsteps of Jodorowsky and Arrabal, and while its goals are less politically and socially charged, it certainly succeeds as a dark, blood-caked vision, full of mental dysfunction and goopy effects. Strapping on the title role, Terek Puckett (MY SWEET SATAN) wanders the bleak countryside, sleeps in

makeshift graves and 'performs' before ragtag crowds, with an act that has him slicing and mutilating himself (in loving close-up) to the crowd's cheers. There are also three diverse women in his life, all played by Kristie Bowersock: His teenage girlfriend, a kinky Goth fan, and a sadistic demon presiding over his TETSUO-like nightmares. Of course, when our Mutilation Man's stage antics get the (small) crowd so worked up that they begin killing everyone else, it leads to his ultimate performance. Meanwhile, in home movie-style flashbacks, we see the childhood domestic violence which led him to this self-inflicted performance art, with DEAD-BEAT AT DAWN-director Jim Van Bebber playing his abusive father in an all-too-believable turn. A bit overlong, with occasionally out-of-control symbolism and self-importance, this is still a beautifully constructed tableau of physical and emotional pain. The production values are intentionally sparse, yet unlike most underground features (which look like shot-on-video shit), Copp and cinematographer Mike King take a more experimental, non-linear approach, particularly in its mixed-medium look and jarring montages. It also boasts a terrifically nerve-jangling soundtrack by Duane Hutchinson. All in all, a refreshingly thoughtful, deeply volatile work, which offers more than you'd expect from its titillating title.

ZERO (Provisional; 1997).

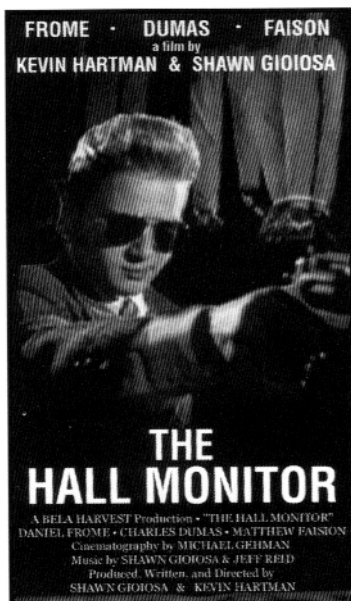
[Fantasma Inc., 1400 W. Devon #440, Chicago, IL 60660]

Written and directed by James Fotopoulos, this is a difficult, somnambulist effort. Heartfelt and creepy as hell, it's primarily set inside a sparse apartment, and offers an all-too-depressing glimpse into one guy's lonely, miserable life. Known only as "the Man" (Warning: Pretension Alert!), his voice-over complains that he has no one to love -- probably because he's so busy reading dirty mags on the toilet. Increasingly angry at women, as well as himself, he occasionally takes a break from his hovel-bound routine to wander into the forest, looking for cute woodland creatures to dissect. Let's not forget the huge cyst on his arm, which he picks at in loving close-up. What begins as the newest candidate to the ERASERHEAD school of filmmaking becomes even more outrageous when he finds the top half of a mannequin, takes it home, names 'her' Gwen, and is soon humping the thing (admitting "I was a Zero in my life, but now I have you"). This fixation leads to an intimate birthday party for Gwen and even pronouncing themselves man and wife. Personally, I hope these domestic moments weren't supposed to be deep, because their absurdity had me cracking up. Admittedly, his plight wears out its welcome at 142 minutes, but considering its dirge-like tone and style, even half that length would be an endurance test for conservative viewers. Convincingly played by Matthew Buckley, this "Man" is definitely on the verge of a claustrophobic meltdown (despite the occasional Dream Woman); but since he's also a blatantly racist homophobe, with a swastika-painted bed sheet, it's difficult to figure out why we should commit 2-1/2 hours of our life to this whiny piss-ant. An obvious labor of love for Fotopoulos, this slow portrait of madness' inner turmoil and isolation is an alternately annoying and hypnotic work.

DIVIDED INTO ZERO (1999).

[Infection Films, 300 Leo-Pariseau #1500, Montreal, Quebec H2W 2P3 Canada]

Three years in the making, this harsh, but extremely personal celluloid journey, courtesy of writer-director Mitch Davis, took home the Jury Prize for Best Narrative Short at this year's Chicago Underground Film Festival. A disturbingly fragmented, 34-minute examination of one man's life, the story ricochets between three different periods, with a trio of actors as this self-described "wanderer" (Max Firatli at 10-years-old, Philippe Daoust at age 30 and Griffith Brewer at 70). With his cesarean birth only beginning an obsession with blood, he begins slicing up his arms with a bare razor blade after the childhood death of his parents; and as an adult, progresses to paying to be cut-up and pissed-on by his lovers. Meanwhile, his voice-over attempts to come to terms with these unorthodox preoccupations, as the film's shocking imagery exposes his haunted, razor-sliced "ghosts." Not for the easily offended, the script touches on topics that have no easy answers, and ends with a gut-wrenching finale of pedophilic-torture. Marinated in a lifetime of emotional pain, DIVIDED INTO ZERO is less impressive for its grim narrative than for the way in which it unfolds -- mixing memory fragments, fantasies, and striking photography into a surreal yet angst-driven scream. Brilliantly constructed, it's also so densely packed that it's difficult to appreciate on a lone viewing. Not the easiest film to embrace, its mindset is so dark and unforgiving that I was actually relieved that I wasn't able to make a more personal connection to this screwed-up protagonist.

**THE HALL MONITOR (1999).**

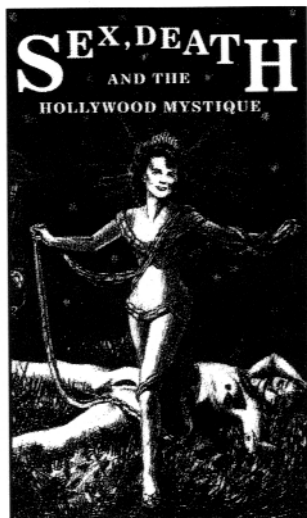
[Bela Harvest Ent., 3128 Middle School Drive, Audubon, PA 19403] This 16mm indie feature boasts a terrific concept, but follows through with unsubtle results. Just imagine if Troma tried to make *HEATHERS*, and you get a notion of this absurd comedy. Set at Rocky Mountain High (whose characters are so broadly-stereotyped that they make John Hughes look like Ibsen), the school population includes the Harry Calahan of Hall Monitors, hotheaded Daniel Kashwood (Dan Frome), who's happy to pull a gun and blow away anyone lacking a Hall Pass. Of course, his actions are perfectly acceptable to the administration, since tardiness is at an all-time low. Meanwhile, members of the football team, the Rocky Mountain Carrots (who have IQ's to match their vegetable namesake) are being systematically murdered by "the Football

Killer." In the process, we meet the beautiful school bitch, the evil guidance counselor, basement-dwelling Vo-Tech slobs, nerds who celebrates the jocks' demises, plus a rebellious punk who whines about the school's social injustice. It's fascinating to see how the filmmakers stretched their wafer-thin concept to a full 90 minutes, and when a belabored joke doesn't succeed, they try and try again, as the viewer continues to squirm. Mind you, there are some subversive, *MAS-SACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH*-style ideas at work, but they're usually lost amidst the title character's grating antics. At least it ends on a solid wrap-up, which successfully drives home the point of the movie. Enthusiastically acted and competently lensed, it's too bad the final result isn't more engaging. Still, writer-directors Kevin Hartman and Shawn Gioiosa should be commended for having the balls to release a gleefully gun-totting high school movie in the wake of today's post-Columbine media witch hunt.

SEX, DEATH AND THE HOLLYWOOD MYSTIQUE (1999).

[Larry Wessel, P.O. Box 1611, Manhattan Beach, CA 90267-1611; \$25 ppd.]

The latest documentary from director Larry Wessel is a lengthy dive into Hollywood's more sordid niches. Unfortunately, although Wessel has a knack for capturing the misfits of our society, in this instance, their tales are rather dry. Primarily, we follow author John Gilmore, who first recalls his days as a struggling actor alongside Natalie Wood and James Dean, then his later career as a true-crime chronicler. Re-examining the subject matter of his books, Gilmore discusses Charles Manson (complete with grisly crime pics) which he chronicled in *The Garbage People*, but offers little insight for Manson fanatics. He continues with the infamous Black Dahlia murder, covered in Gilmore's *Severed* (but long after James Ellroy made it a best-selling topic); as well as Charles "Pied Piper of Tucson" Schmid, who was accused of murdering several girls. We also hear from director Curtis Harrington, who describes his love of freaks and a Las Vegas encounter with his idol, Marlene Dietrich. Forrest J. Ackerman conducts a tour of his famed Ackermansion of Tinseltown memorabilia, and recalls setting up Fritz Lang on an unsuccessful date with *QUEEN OF BLOOD*'s Florence Marly. Finally, in the most depressing sideline, there's Kelly Monroe, another in the long line of starry-eyed Hollywood acting-hopefuls, who's now a weathered call-girl. Unfocused and overlong, the film is often aggravatingly un-cinematic, such as watching Gilmore read lengthy sections from his own book. Adding to this frustration, Wessel tends to dote on insignificant moments (e.g. painting a woman's toes for 3-full-minutes! And why the hell are those Goth gals mugging into the camera?). While this would be intolerable on the big screen, on video, it only makes you thankful for your VCR's Fast Forward button. Sure, this is the *real* story, told by Hollywood's survivors, but it offers 30 minutes worth of interesting material, stretched to a whopping 155 minutes (!).

**SERGIO LAPEL'S DRAWING BLOOD (1999).**

[Onur Tukul, 2031-1/2 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, NC 28405]

Yet another take on present-day vampirism, this 16mm feature from director-pseudonym Sergio Lapel mixes the necessary exploitation with a healthy dose of distinctive visual style. While I'm always a bit dubious about films that screw about with the basic vampire mythos, this tweaks the genre just enough to keep it continually entertaining. Dawn Spinella stars as Diana, a female artist-vampire, who keeps her pretty models still by sucking them dry before sketching them, then using their blood as both a meal and a medium. Helping her out, Diana's grungy male assistant Edmond (Kirk Wilson) rounds up her future meals and hauls away her remains, even as the city is plastered over with flyers for these missing young women. This modern Renfield's life hits a snag when he falls for a hard-bitten, sawbuck-a-blowjob prostitute (Erin Smith), only to have Diana seduce her into becoming her latest artistic subject. In other plot strands, Edmond's vampire-wannabee best friend gets a shot at his dream (of course, he's got to slaughter his pal in order to achieve it); there are flashbacks in which we learn how Edmond first met Diana; and the script takes an increasingly comedic tone when Edmond has to teach his crazy old 'turned' father (Larry Palatta) the basics of vampirism. Making the most of its low-budget, this comes equipped with realistic backdrops and inventive camerawork by Shawn Wellen, and unlike recent female bloodsucker pics, it lacks artsy-fartsy pretensions (*NADJA, THE ADDICTION*) and laughable self-importance (*RAZOR BLADE SMILE*), in order to focus purely on blood, sex and sly humor. Though its disparate elements never quite jell and some of the dialogue is a bit clumsy, *DRAWING BLOOD* is a surprisingly enjoyable horror outing, with likable lead performances and several cool twists.

EVIL SISTER II: BOUND BY BLOOD (1999).

[Brad Sykes, 5541 Laurel Canyon #26, Valley Village, CA 91607]

Writer-director Brad Sykes proved his technical proficiency with his short film *TEARS* [SC#12], and in this feature, he mixes low-budget sexploitation with one-dimensional family dysfunction, while unapologetically lading on the gore, nudity and cheap thrills. As for its plot, imagine you're driving down a deserted road, when you spot a beautiful young woman, walking alone. You give her a lift, after which she poses for some nude photos, fucks you and stabs you several dozen times with a huge knife. So it goes with Lorna (Heather Branch), a mute, blood-lusting bitch who lives in a junk-strewn stretch of desert, luring in men with her minimalist wardrobe (a cape and nothing else) and butchering them. Meanwhile, Lorna's cranky, domineering father is obsessively searching for his kin, with good sister Tam's psychic-link helping to track her down. Let's not forget a guy named Widow, who's obsessed with finding this blood-babe, after stumbling across a roll of her sexy photos. No surprise, everyone coincidentally winds up at the same roadside motel, as dark family secrets are exposed thanks to lecherous, sweaty-lipped, voyeuristic papa...Branch spends big chunks of the movie naked, drenching herself in blood or humping her next victim, and it's a credit to her performance (and her wig) that I didn't even realize it was the same actress playing both Lorna and Tam. Competently made, this 79-minute effort moves along at a good clip, even if it doesn't cover much new ground. In the process, there are effective knife-penetration-FX by Stephen Warren, who keeps the murders vicious and enjoyably excessive, while Sykes' finale is so overwrought and blood-soaked that you can't help but giggle. Speaking of the director, he also turns up on-camera, playing the first victim, who's straddled by his naked leading lady and gruesomely slaughtered. Ahh, sometimes it's fun to be in charge.

T-BACK: THE BARE-ASSED CARNAL KNIGHT (1998).

[Pickled Creek Productions, P.O. Box 4983, Winter Park, FL 32793]

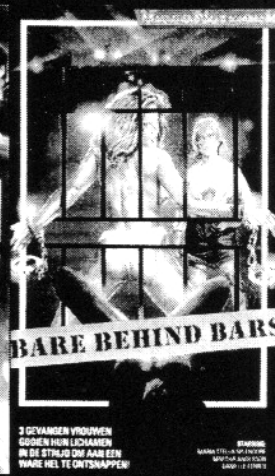
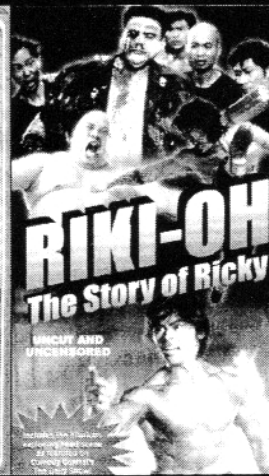
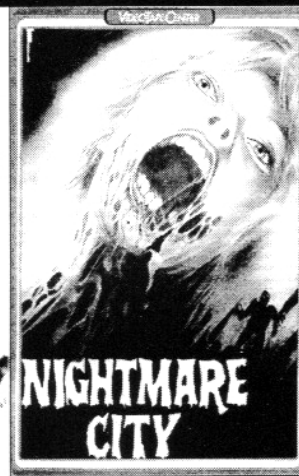
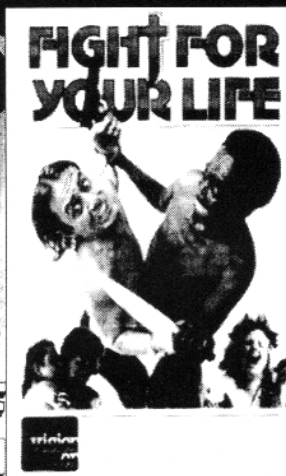
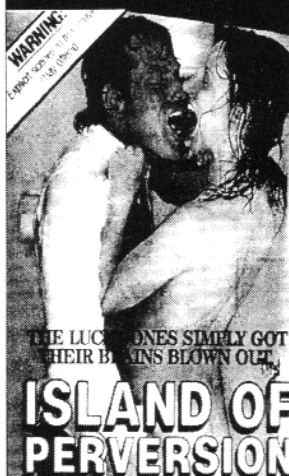
I hate to trash a movie that was obviously tossed together by a bunch of enthusiastic friends with no discernible filmmaking skills, but I also have the responsibility to warn everyone else to avoid this forehead-slapping experience. Two years in the making, and with a total budget of \$900, it begins when the only survivor of Atlantis, the immortal T-Back (Carlos LaBongo) turns up on a Florida shore in a ratty wig, sunglasses and a gold g-string. Soon, this pasty-assed hero takes on an ancient demon (a guy in a black robe) who's trying to kill the local white trash oddballs. Never making a lick of sense, it introduces a couch-cushion pervert, tobacco-chewin' idiots and a robot killing machine (played by a guy inside an embellished garbage can). Nearly two hours long, this numbing excuse for a movie is almost unwatchable. Written and directed by Richard Christy, every scene runs three times longer than necessary, the actors stumble over their lines and crack up on-camera, the sound is so lousy that you're unable to make out the dialogue (which, in this case, is an unexpected blessing), and flashbacks to Atlantis look like the same locale, except for hand-written signs stating it's indeed 'Atlantis' (I'm surprised they managed to spell it correctly). As for star-power, Butch Patrick (Eddie Munster) appears for about 10 seconds, as T-Back's dead dad. Thank goodness, the filmmakers don't seem to take any of this shit seriously either, and while a sequel is promised, my only advice to them is: "Slowly put down the camera...Now walk away from it, and don't look back."

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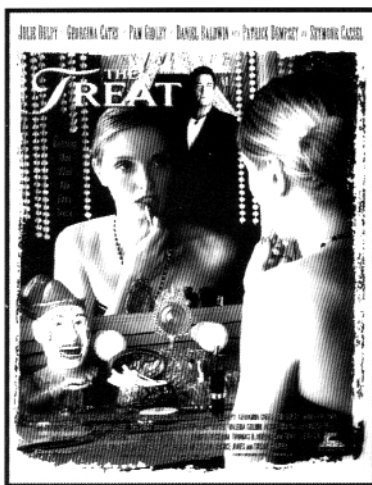
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NEW RELEASES

THE BRAVE (VSoM; 1997). Johnny Depp has worked with some of the most eccentric, original directors in the business, including Tim Burton, Emir Kusturica, and Jim Jarmusch; so you'd think he'd pick up a thing or two when it came time for his directorial debut. He didn't. Yet somehow, this rambling, self-important drama appeared in competition at the '97 Cannes Film Fest, where it received scathing reviews and, over two years later, remains unreleased in the US. Depp also takes on the starring role of Raphael, an American Indian living on the edge of a garbage dump with his family. Broke, he applies for a mysterious job, and ultimately meets a wheelchair-bound Marlon Brando(!) who waxes philosophically about life and death, as we slowly discover that Raphael's "job" is a snuff scenario — he's to be paid \$50,000, and one week later, he'll be tortured and killed by wealthy sadists. With his advance payment in hand, we then watch him contemplate his decision, roam his squatter village (which is about to be razed), bond with his family, and it's all so fucking dull! This belabored muck drags on for nearly two full hours, and while Depp's character might be "brave," he's also a nitwit. Oddly, the misguided script (co-written by Depp) never questions that 50G's won't go very far for a widow with two children, particularly the way Raphael is blowing his final paycheck on a big-screen TV and a huge fiesta for his poverty-stricken community. Meanwhile, Frederick Forrest and Max Perlich turn up as father-and-son junkmen, Clarence Williams III is a concerned priest, while Brando's "special appearance" amounts to one lousy scene. The creepy opening moments got my hopes up, but nothing else comes close, including a last-minute influx of cheap revenge against a local thug. In case you were wondering, the finale is so ridiculously protracted and anti-climactic that I wanted to toss an empty beer can at the TV. Still, it's a good looking production, thanks to solid camerawork by longtime Kusturica-cameraman Vilko Filac; there's even a score by Iggy Pop (who has a funny cameo, chewing on an immense chunk of meat). If you're searching for a voyeuristic glimpse into the underbelly of perversion, forget it! Yet another movie which perpetuates the urban myth of snuff culture, it's also the dumbest film that could ever be made out of this storyline.



THE TREAT (VSoM; 1997). This self-proclaimed "throbbing drama for mature adults only!" never turned up in the US, despite its recognizable cast and exploitable scenario. Directed by Jonathan Gems (who wrote MARS ATTACKS), it's based on a seemingly-pointless play by his mom Pam Gems (supposedly an acclaimed playwright, but this one stinks like a month-old cat-litter tray). The plot revolves around three Hollywood hookers, who dabble in hourly-rate fantasies. There's Georgina Cates as Mimi, Pamela Gidley (of CHERRY 2000 infamy) as Dolly, while Francesca is played by Julie Delpy, the arthouse-babe from EUROPA, EUROPA and Kieslowski's WHITE

(who should fire her shitheaded agent after this gig and AN AMERICAN WERE-WOLF IN PARIS). Meanwhile, Daniel Baldwin is their nightclub owner/pimp, who's setting up a party for a pocketed city councilman. In between the big plans, the gals dress up in exotic costumes for their fetishistic clients (often to comic effect). Larry Drake plays a john with a thing for little girls; incestuous Michael York arrives on the heels of his daughter's wedding, and has Mimi decked out as a bride; Vincent Perez enjoys playing Temperamental Artist & Models; and LADIES MAN's Alfred Molina is a Navy man into spanking. In addition, flaccid Patrick Dempsey turns up as a distraught husband who discovers that runaway wife Francesca is now "the best bitch in the business." In smaller roles, there's Mink Stole as a diner owner, Kitten Natividad as a party dancer and Stuart Lancaster typecast as an old fart (who gets the choice line: "Women are here for one purpose, and that's to empty the balls."). In addition, Yancy Butler (who normally reeks in flicks like HARD TARGET) sparks the story to life for a whopping two minutes, as a cop. Along the way, there's plenty of slinky lingerie but zilch in the way of sex, bare flesh or eroticism, while the drama is as emotionally empty as a hooker's orgasm. The film culminates with the upscale party for councilman

Seymour Cassel, which unites most of the cast as attendees, as well as a tragedy that leads to its sickest, necrophilic moment. Unfortunately, it doesn't have the balls to follow through, and can't make up for the otherwise dull 87 minutes. The only thing holding this together are the passable performers, and few escape with their dignity intact. My only question: Who did Jonathan Gems have to blow to get this cinematic pile-up financed?

TERROR FIRMER (Troma; 1999). The latest outing from the cine-madmen at Troma makes THE TOXIC AVENGER look like THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY. This is so outrageous, so grating and so self-promoting that it's less a simple movie than a bombardment of the senses. Lloyd Kaufman's previous outing, TROMEO AND JULIET, won over some new fans with its mix of Shakespeare and Schlock, but this unrepentant free-for-all will appeal only to Troma's most hardcore, deranged fans (like me). Inspired by Kaufman's recent book (which hilariously chronicled Troma's history), the script offers a warped self-portrait of their unique filmmaking process and what happens when a female serial killer begins terrorizing their set. Centering on an indie film company in the midst of making a new TOXIC AVENGER movie, LOVE GOD's Will Keenan plays a Family-Value-friendly sound-man, Alyce LaTourelle is a love-sick PA, while Kaufman is a hoot as their blind director, who's always cajoling his underpaid, overworked cast and crew to persevere, and is blissfully oblivious to the carnage around him. Trent Haaga displays the most Tromatic energy as their grue-happy, special-effects whiz, but the most memorable role goes to Yaniv Sharon, who runs through the streets of NYC naked as a lovably-braindead PA. In supporting turns, there's porn-heavyweight Ron Jeremy, Motorhead's Lemmy, Joe Franklin, plus Kaufman's own daughter as the director's traumatized kid. Meanwhile, the film mixes its multi-character plot and over-the-top perfs with pickle-sex, gallons of vomit, porta-john overflow, NYPD plunger-jokes, puppet-sadism, and where else will you find not one, but two, Sam Fuller jokes? Raucously capturing the experience of being on an actual Troma set, this never lets up with its abusive, sophomoric humor, as brains are blown out, heads are chopped open, limbs are severed, and a pregnant woman has her fetus torn out of her belly. In fact, this much gore would be impossible to watch, except that it's all hilariously, intentionally fake. Hauling the no-holds-barred Troma aesthetic into the 21st century, with all of the ripe melodrama, malice and in-jokes that you could ask for, this film takes no prisoners — it's either love its unapologetic bad taste and no-budget cinematic insight, or run screaming from the theatre.

FRAT HOUSE (1998). I'll check out any film by Todd Phillips, who gave us the blistering G.G. Allin documentary HATED, and here he shares credit with Andrew Gurland, who co-directed the Al Goldstein documentary SCREWED. Still, the most interesting aspect of this hour-long effort is its backstory, which still lacks a finale. Funded as an episode of HBO's America Undercover series, the premise has two young filmmakers chronicling the rituals of fraternity Pledge Week hazing, and the corrosive result earned it a Grand Jury Documentary Prize at Sundance. So what's the problem? Once the film was about to go public, rumors surfaced, alleging that portions had been staged, frat members had been set-up, and that the on-screen participants weren't even real pledges — but instead, full-fledged frat-fucks who were paid \$50 apiece to fake it all. What's the truth? HBO decided to play it safe and (for now) shelved this possibly-fraudulent flick, while Phillips parlayed it into even better paychecks...As for the film itself, it's no wonder frats were upset, since it makes them look like foul neanderthals. With Todd and Andrew in pursuit of "the length men go to in order to belong," they slowly sneak their cameras into this clandestine world, which includes binge drinking, casual discussion of their drug-'n'-sex intake, and mindlessly-regurgitating the frat-mantra "being Greek is being family." This in-bred lifestyle is best personified by muscle-bound "Blossom", who invites the guys and their camera into the frat's secret, 10-week-long pledge indoctrination, that includes Marine-style physical hazing, sleep deprivation and threatened brandings. But before long, the pissed-off Frat Boys get fed up with these voyeuristic filmmakers and physically toss 'em off campus, forcing them to find an even grungier college to cover. This time around, they even agree to endure the final weeks of hazing, first-hand, including mouthfuls of Tabasco sauce, a night spent in a dog cage, and finally, the abusive Hell Night. Meanwhile, the most humorous moment is a visit to check out how sororities pledge, only to find the sweetest little sing-in. If true, this is a seriously damaged look at the dregs of college life. If at all faked, it's still a ballsy calling-card to get yourself noticed in Hollywood. Either way, it's difficult not to applaud FRAT HOUSE's potent, anti-frat, anti-conformity agenda.

WADD: THE LIFE & TIMES OF JOHN C. HOLMES (1999). Superbly directed by Cass Paley and winner of the Best Documentary prize at the South By Southwest Film Festival, this feature-length look at the late John C. Holmes is an informative, entertaining, warts-and-all portrait of the '70s world of hardcore-porn and its earliest male icon. A cinematic history lesson (of a genre rarely taken seriously), what's most compelling is the avalanche of interviews from performers, filmmakers and fans, all providing first-hand (often clashing) insight. They include Al Goldstein, Larry Flynt, BOOGIE NIGHTS-director Paul T. Anderson, Ron Jeremy, John Leslie, plus directors Bob Chinn, Bob Vosse and Anne Perry. With LA Times critic Kenneth Turan lending the subject legitimacy, there are quotes from old LAPD detectives, actresses Gloria Leonard, Candida Royale, Sharon Mitchell, Annette Haven, and the list of adult-industry-vets goes on and on. After a brief overview (for newcomers) of the hassles in making these films and getting them exhibited, it dives into the life of superstar Holmes and his legendary 13-1/2 inch cock. Arriving in the right place, at the right time, "awkward kid" Holmes became the cash cow of Triple-X cinema, with Bob Chinn recalling how he transformed Holmes into infamous private-dick Johnny Wadd (and paid him only \$75 a day). No puff-piece, like Holmes' self-made EXHAUSTED, this peels away his layers of lies, with manager Bill Amerson exposing how John's bio was fake (but that he soon "believed his own bullshit"). There are also insights into how John became an LAPD informant and helped bust many of his own compadres; plus childhood anecdotes and photos provided by first-wife Sharon Holmes, who describes her emotional turmoil when hubby became a porn mega-star. Meanwhile, the grimmest recollections are courtesy of Dawn, Holmes' then-15-year-old mistress, who was there as John's free-basing led to running drugs, pimping Dawn in exchange for his dope, and finally becoming an accomplice in a savage, multiple drug murder. If you couldn't guess, it's all downhill from there, even as the HIV-positive Holmes was still screwing (without protection) on-camera and died at 43. As expertly edited and researched as any mainstream documentary, this is more than just a spectacular, insanely-tragic glimpse into the highs and lows of show-biz fame. It's also a true American success (and failure) story, full of insight and idiocy, which brings an all-too-human voice to one man's self-destruction. WADD is a must-see for any fan.

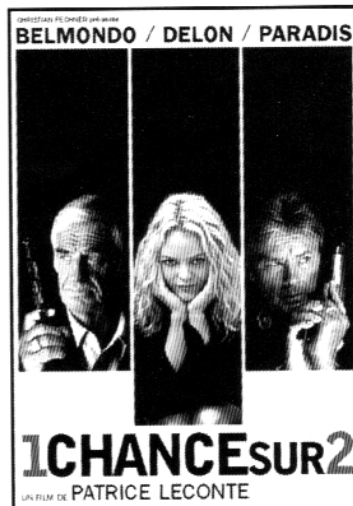
DIRTY COP — NO DONUT [a.k.a. Low Down Dirty Cop] (Salt City Home Video; 1999). Embracing a simple yet effective premise, this low-budget feature mixes the handheld, cinema-verité style of TV real-life police shows such as COPS, the dementia of Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me*, and all of the power-hungry behavior that we'd always imagined an average, asshole policeman could get away with. Following a smalltown cop on his out-of-control, nightly rounds, Joel D. Wynkoop stars as Gus Kimball, who looks like an in-bred cousin to Rod Steiger's sheriff of *IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT*, and gives one of his best performances. Looking and acting the part, he expertly captures the swagger and inflated-ego of a dipshit lawman. Going about his nightly business, Gus casually steals a snack from a 7-11, "confiscates" bags of coke from a local dealer, screws a streetside hooker, and forces a local pedophile — at gunpoint — to slice off his own penis. He's a foul creation, and writer-director Tim Ritter expertly blends the usual COPS-esque squad car banter with Joel's increasingly-stoned, law-bending escapades, which has him tossing suspects into the trunk of his car and abusing anyone in his path. This works best when at its most (seemingly) improvised, such as Kimball getting pissed-off at the crew, since he wants the camera kept on *him*; taking a quick snort of coke in-between assignments; and doing his damndest to rationalize his fucked-up lifestyle. At 80 minutes, this concept eventually runs out of steam, but still finds time to include an insightful, where-are-they-now epilogue of the main characters and culprits. The supporting cast is a decidedly mixed bag, but this is Wynkoop's show, and he's willing to follow through on the film's agenda as a fearlessly repulsive dickhead. He nails it! In fact, this hyperactive, slobbering, sweating pig would probably makes a fine poster boy for the current NYPD recruitment campaign.

HALF A CHANCE [1 Chance Sour 2] (VSoM; 1998) and WITCH WAY LOVE [Un Amour de Sorcière] (VSoM; 1997). Here's a double dose of Vanessa Paradis flicks, which were too frothy and French to receive an American release. For those unfamiliar with Paradis (and in the US, that's most of you), she's a popular Euro-singer/sex kitten, who first made celluloid waves by doffing her clothes at the tender age of 17 in *WHITE WEDDING*. In *HALF A CHANCE*, this cinema newcomer is paired with two legends of Parisian cool, Jean-Paul Belmondo and Alain Delon, now both in their mid-60's, a bit grizzled and in their first substantial pairing since 1970's *BORSALINO*. Directed by Patrice Leconte (*MONSIEUR HIRE*), don't let the silly storyline or this print's grating English-dubbing turn you off. Paradis plays a gorgeous car thief, Alice, whose mother passes away and leaves her info that one of two lost loves is her missing father. Tracking them down, Belmondo plays a car dealer, while Delon is a snooty restaurateur, and after setting up a rendezvous between the three, each possible-papa begins vying for Alice's thrill-seeking affections (thanks to handy race cars and a heli-

copter). Of course, Delon and Belmondo work wonderfully together, such as their first, confusing trip to a McDonald's. The script soon morphs into a crime caper with the appearance of Russian mobsters, assassinations, government surveillance, and a missing fortune. It begins when Alice is chased by some thugs, steals a car (which contains 50 million in Soviet mob money) to escape, and when the money disappears, the pissed-off Russkies take revenge on Alice and her Two Dads. Sounds ridiculous? Admittedly, yes, but this is exactly when the film finds its rhythm and the fun really kicks in. You see, both of these codgers have secret pasts, with Jean-Paul an ex-soldier of fortune and Alain a master thief, and equipped with a hefty cache of weapons, these old farts decide to relive their glory days in order to save Alice. It's Grumpy Old Mercenaries! Despite wafer-thin characterization, it's charming to see Delon and Belmondo together again, as they leap from roofs, psychologically torture people for info, take on an army of hitmen, and indulge in cut-rate James Bondian shenanigans (which has Belmondo once again hanging from a helicopter's rope ladder). An amusing lark, its only downside is that you can easily imagine Robin Williams and Billy Crystal in the inevitable US remake...Next up is *WITCH WAY LOVE*, a supernatural romantic-comedy hodgepodge starring Paradis (who again provides a pretty central fixture for more charismatic actors). Filmed in English by director Rene Manzor (*LE PASSAGE*), it co-stars Jean Reno, Jeanne Moreau, ALLY McBEAL-hunk Gil Bellows, and Dabney Coleman. In what could be considered *BEWITCHED: THE MOVIE*, Paradis stars as Morgane, a pixie-voiced young witch with an annoying rugrat who performs his own impromptu magic. Her latest scheme involves technology-millionaire Michael Firth (Bellows), who becomes smitten with this sultry sorceress thanks to a love potion. But why has she spirited him away? As an antidote to this cloying scenario, we meet Reno as the powerful warlock Uncle Molok, who's magically murdering a list of unsuspecting individuals. Firth is on this death-list, and it's all due to some supernatural hokey about Molok wanting an heir and needing Morgane's baby for the job. It doesn't make a lot of sense, but Reno is terrific at playing an evil bastard, while Moreau turns up as Morgane's witchy grandmother, and Coleman is Firth's money-hungry partner. After a vapid start, the film builds up a fair supply of charm (if you can ignore its saccharine potholes) and takes an action-packed turn in the final 20 minutes, when Firth invades Molok's castle. Bellows is energetic but bland (it's no wonder he eventually found TV-stardom), while chipmunkish Paradis is cute, but frighteningly limited in her acting. The film's moments of magic are also interesting to watch, since Manzor avoided cheesy CGI, and instead hired stage magician George Proust to physically create many of these FX, which gives it all a quaint appeal. The story takes place around the world, but since they couldn't afford an actual NYC shoot, there's one establishing shot, followed by a patently fake Manhattan mock-up (complete with long-defunct Checker Cabs). Full of sledgehammer romantic-whimsy that only the French can tolerate, this is a hit-and-miss effort that's at its best when at its darkest.



PERDITA DURANGO (VSoM; 1997). The latest feature from Spanish cult phenom Alex de la Iglesia (*ACCION MUTANTE*, *DAY OF THE BEAST*) is his most sprawling production yet. Based on a book by *WILD AT HEART*-scripter Barry Gifford, this takes his supporting character of Perdita Durango (played in Lynch's film by Isabella Rossellini), and makes her the star of a new adventure (with Rosie Perez taking over the role). Like *WILD AT HEART*, this road movie is noisy, outrageous, violent, and a little bit empty. Filmed in English, with only occasional moments of Spanish, the usually-unbearable Perez plays Perdita, a hard-boiled femme fatale who becomes smitten with a long-haired stranger named



Romeo Dolorosa (Javier Bardem), whom she meets at the Mexican-US border. He's a bank robber who just burnt his partner in crime (Santiago Segura), as well as a Santeria Priest who performs corpse-mutilation and blood-drinking for tourists, but the two are knockin' boots within minutes and hit the road for some cheap (no doubt illegal) thrills. Similar in structure to all too many indie crime-couple flicks, with its cynical characters and seedy veneer, *de la Iglesia* also tosses in plenty of deranged humor. Soon, the pair have kidnapped two teens, Harley Cross and Aimee Graham (a younger version of her sis, Heather), who are as vapid as the leads are sadistic. After Romeo and Perdita rape the kids, they plan to use them for a human sacrifice. In over-the-top supporting roles, Screamin' Jay Hawkins plays Romeo's Santeria assistant; Don Stroud, looking worse for wear but as slimy as ever, is a mobster who hires Romeo to drive an illegal shipment of human fetuses to Las Vegas (where they'll be used for skin creme); while a pre-SOPRANO'S James Galdolfini steals the show as an obsessed, much-abused (and underdeveloped) DEA agent on the pair's trail. Oddly enough, its secondary characters and sudden digressions are usually more amusing than the central storyline. While chaotic enough to provide some laughs, its mean-spirited, quickly-grating leads wear thin after awhile, and unlike *de la Iglesia*'s earlier duo, the flick's casual sadism and black humor are at the expense of the characters' humanity and depth. Still, it has a fair share of gratuitous charms, and deserves a look, even if it seems like a homogenization of this filmmaker's unique vision with Hollywood's insipid concept of "cutting edge" cinema.

BORN TO LOSE (Provisional; 1999). Using LA's underground music scene as its backdrop, this DIY 16mm drama follows several down-on-their-luck (and low-on-braincells) punk musicians. Lensed in Venice, CA, Joseph Rye stars as Steve Monroe, the uncompromising lead singer of a barely-known garage band called The Spoilers. Having tasted success while with an earlier band, the increasingly brainfried Monroe is now "a walking casualty," dabbling in drug addiction, with only lead guitarist Johnny (Francis Fallon) blindly-loyal enough to repeatedly take his side. On top of that, bleary Stevie's new Goth-girlfriend Lisa (Elyse Ashton) convinces him to try heroin, which leaves him so wasted that he's vomiting in the middle of press interviews. You know, I really wanted to like this movie, but only folks who are as disconnected as Stevie will be able to sit through 79-minutes of his pathetic life (and those viewers will probably consider him a role model). Burning everyone he knows in the name of "integrity" and prone to childish tantrums, it's not as if the guy is legitimately talented; he just says he is, but is too fucked up to prove it. At first, director Doug Cawker gives the story a loose, ingratiating quality, only to take on a heavy, humorless approach to his thin mate-

rial (as if he were deluded into thinking it was insightful). Meanwhile, the non-stop drug use is certainly appropriate for the material, but it's handled with all of the restraint of Shane MacGowan on All-You-Can-Drink Night. Too much time is also spent listening to these pathetic musician-deadbeats, who continually dream of future fame, even though they can barely remember where they put their instruments. Sure, it's accurate (since I spent my college years listening to similar, goin'-nowhere nonsense), but it's rarely amusing and never intelligent. No question, Rye does a fine job playing this annoying, self-destructive creep. You'll hate him! Still, this portrait of a wanker will have you crossing your fingers, in hopes that he'll overdose and move onto a more compelling subject.

FREAK (E.I. Independent Cinema; 1999). Written and directed by Tyler Tharpe, this is packaged like any average horror gross-out, but turned out to be a surprisingly somber little tale, full of suspenseful moments and a title-character who's as intriguing as any big-studio psycho. In a compelling prologue, a seemingly-disfigured little boy is kept locked away from civilization by his shrewish, obviously insane mother. But that changes after she gives birth, tries to kill this new baby girl, only to have sonny bash her head in. But in the most intriguing twist, the boy has only been *told* he's a freak by his destructive, out-to-lunch mom. Unfortunately, the psychological damage has already been done, and a decade later, as a mental-hospitalized adult, little has changed -- as he keeps his face swaddled in bandages. Thank goodness for idiot supporting characters, such as a van driver (Travis Patton) who leaves this maniac alone in order to grab a snack. Oops! It looks like our 'freak' has taken a stroll! Meanwhile, two sisters, Staci (Amy Paliganoff) and pre-teen Jodi (Andrea Johnson), are traveling cross-country and catch the eye of this gauze-headed sicko, who decides that Jodi reminds him of his own, long-lost sis. Refreshingly low-key and character-driven, the acting leaves a bit to be desired at times, but Tharpe keeps the story barreling along. I only wish all of its leads were better drawn, since the sisters are generic (with Staci's grating voice-over not helping matters) and Patton's driver is one-dimensional. Still, it's a well-made, effective yarn, steeped in underlying family-dysfunction, which takes itself seriously, delivers the requisite thrills and has a satisfying wrap-up.



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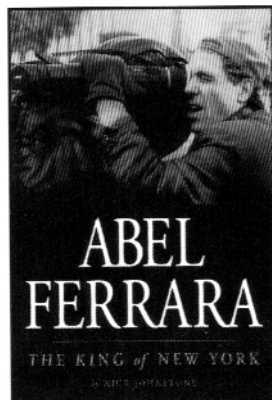
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Books AND Zines



ABEL FERRARA: THE KING OF NEW YORK by Nick Johnstone (Omnibus Press).

Abel Ferrara's movies have always divided audiences into love-'em or hate-'em camps. This book is definitely in the former category, because where else would you find 15 pages devoted to the subtleties of *DRILLER KILLER*? Covering Ferrara's life and work, while comparing him to Fassbinder and Pasolini (except Abel hasn't croaked...yet), this never digs too deep into his private life -- preferring to cobble together other interviews. Unfortunately, that means the most potentially fascinating portions of Ferrara's "erratic" behavior are avoided in favor of the book's primary emphasis: A critical analysis of his 20-year career in films and TV. After a brief, 36-page bio, it's onto his directorial out-

ings, from gritty features to *MIAMI VICE* episodes, with Johnstone dissecting them all, right down to Ferrara's constant "quotations" of the likes of Bresson, Godard, Polanski, and Scorsese. In terms of critical insight and info, this is invaluable, but it's not exactly light reading. A bit long-winded, it would've been nice to have a few exclusive quotes from Ferrara, but from all reports, it'd be difficult to get a coherent sentence outta the guy nowadays. Though I would've loved to have gotten more info on Ferrara's early porn-effort *NINE LIVES OF A WET PUSSY*, or basic gossip (such as the drug-fueled anecdotes I've heard from people who've been on his sets), Johnstone decides to take the high road. Including several photos of bleary-eyed Abel, this is a good read for academic studies, but never picks at the scabs that have obviously fueled his career and private demons.

BEYOND TERROR: THE FILMS OF LUCIO FULCI by Stephen Thrower (FAB Press, P.O. Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU, England; \$40 ppd.)

If you're a Fulci fanatic, you'd better grab this hefty volume ASAP, since only 1500 hardcover copies are available. After that, you'll be stuck with a paperback edition, due out later this year. Weighing in at over 300 pages, this is a coffee-table book for the true cult-movie deviant. Although best known for his later gore-fests, Lucio Fulci's directorial career has spanned comedies, westerns, costume epics, as well as gems like *THE BEYOND*; embracing the good, the bad and the deliciously tacky, Thrower gives them all a fair shake. After a foreword by daughter Antonella Fulci and a quick bio, the book is broken up into thematic chapters, which not only embrace Lucio's work, but offer brief history lessons on Italy's zombie cinema, *giallos*, and harsh-horror. Thrower also includes sidebar plot-synopses, photos galore, plus thoughtful analysis of Fulci's most important (often unappreciated) films. Meanwhile, completists will revel in the history of his early efforts, which are usually ignored in favor of his gooier hits, and help us understand the scope of his talent. Capped off with a detailed filmography for not only Lucio, but his actors and actresses, I doubt there will ever be a finer, more insightful book on Fulci's career. Alas, like so many cinematic greats, he's not around to enjoy this lavish, long-overdue tribute.



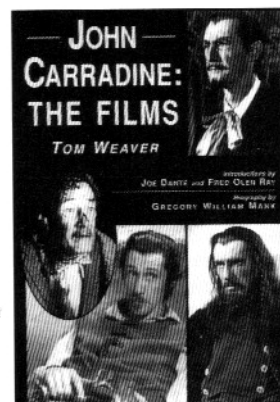
B-MOVIE HORRORS by John Thonen (Movie Club, Inc. 4504 Hershey Way, Baltimore, MD 21236; \$14.95).

Nowadays, it seems like every imaginable filmmaker has a book devoted to their career, and this softcover volume offers additional proof. In this instance, it's director Don Dohler, whose name undoubtedly elicits a "Who?" from average moviegoers, but is fondly remembered by schlock cinema fans thanks to no-budget outings like *GALAXY INVADER*, *FIEND* and *THE ALIEN FACTOR* (which made the cover of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*). From 1976 to 1987, he created five fea-

tures, and beginning with an intro by Dohler himself, this 96-page book devotes a lengthy chapter to each effort. Meticulously detailing their pre-production, financing, filming, and distribution, author (and long-time friend) John Thonen valiantly tries to convince us that Dohler's cinematic quintet is worth a look, when in reality, they're best remembered for their independent enthusiasm than overall quality. It helps that Thonen had total cooperation from Dohler, from childhood anecdotes and aborted ideas, to early shorts and founding the '70s amateur-movie mag *Cinemagic*. Loaded with production stills and anecdotes, Dohler's celluloid legacy might be slight, but this slim volume offers a surprising amount of insight (and nostalgia) on this now-extinct form of home-made genre filmmaking.

JOHN CARRADINE: THE FILMS by Tom Weaver (McFarland & Company, Inc. Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$69 ppd.)

The first book to ever focus entirely on the lengthy career of the late, great John Carradine, this is a beautifully researched and presented work. Beginning with introductions by Joe Dante and Fred Olen Ray (both recalling their film work with crotchety Carradine), that's followed by a fascinating, quote-laced biography written by Gregory William Mank, which somehow compacts Carradine's life into 43 pages, while touching on his stage work, TV credits, and personal and financial problems, on his way to becoming one of Hollywood's most beloved actors. Still, the emphasis of this 408 page book is on his filmography, covered in chronological order, and complete with cast, crew and plot info -- from classics like *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* and *STAGECOACH*, to cheesy gigs in *BILLY THE KID VERSUS DRACULA* and *VAMPIRE HOOKERS*. For his larger roles, Weaver includes longer analyses, including various quotes from Carradine and others involved, and critical opinion from their initial release. I can't imagine how much time it must've taken to compile this work, since it covers such a wide range of subject matter and obviously forced Weaver to sit through a ton of crappy movies. His effort was well spent, because the result is an intelligently written, exhaustive reference book that's definitely worth a look whether you're a hardcore Carradine fan or not.



BLOOD & BLACK LACE by Adrian Luther Smith (Stray Cat Publishing, P.O. Box 36, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 4YT, UK; £19.99 ppd.)

Devoted to the wild world of Italian thrillers, this comprehensive, 160-page softcover reviews over 200 gory, sexy outings. Of course, all of the long-acknowledged masters, such as Argento, Fulci and Bava are included, as well as *giallo* icons like Umberto Lenzi and Sergio Martino. In addition to a few odd (but welcome) entries like Antonioni's *BLOW UP* and Nic Roeg's *DON'T LOOK NOW*, there are tons of incredible cinematic obscurities (particularly for American audiences, who can only find these movies through bootleg sources), and while I recognized a few of the weirder items like *DEATH LAID AN EGG* and *IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH*, many of them came as revelations. In addition to its well-written criticism, what really stands out are its graphics, which includes hundreds of gorgeous, full-color advertisements and makes it a necessary acquisition for any EuroTrash enthusiast...Also from Stray Cat Publishing is *VIDEO NASTIES* by Allan Bryce (£16.99 ppd.). Focusing on the violent videos which have been banned in England since 1984, this 164-page softcover includes full-color video-sleeve reproductions, reviews and credits on all 75 of these infamous titles, which (if you believe the dickheaded censors) pose a threat to the UK's youth.

BABYLON BLUE by David Flint (Creation Books; \$22.95).

The X-rated genre has rarely been taken seriously by mainstream critics, even during its shot-on-film glory days of the '70s, when legit newspapers like the N.Y. Times would actually allow porn-movie ads to run in their pages. This terrific book tries to set the record straight. Beginning with the envelope-pushing sexploitation of the '60s, this fascinating overview of the adult film industry covers all of the

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ALPHA BLUE ARCHIVES, Dept. Shock, P.O. Box 16072, Oakland, CA 94610. An amazing array of vintage sleaze, from softcore fare and nudie-roughies, to XXX-gems starring the genre's raunchiest superstars. Visit their site at: <http://www.alphabluearchives.com>.

BLACKEST HEART MEDIA, Shawn Smith, P.O. Box 3376, Antioch, CA 94531-3376. Packed with the weirdest, nastiest films and products, including t-shirts, comics, DVD's, and CD's. Their catalog is \$3, or head to: <http://www.houseofhorrors.com/blackest.htm>.

BLOODGORE, P.O. Box 543, Iselin, NJ 08830. \$2 (cash or postal money order) gets you their catalog, filled with horror, gore, Mondo movies, and X-rated sleaze.

BOOTLEG LIFE, P.O. Box 138545, Chicago, IL 60613. These video degenerates offer up the raunchiest, grimmest XXX-'n'-fetish pics from around the globe. \$4 (plus age statement) gets you their "Scatalog."

CINEFEAR VIDEO, P.O. Box 1742, Baldwin, NY 11510. Containing everything from exploitation, British horror, Franco, and Naschy, their music-themed Sound & Vision supplement contains rare audio-and-video tapes.

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA, P.O. Box 12161, Spring, TX 77391-2161. Craig Ledbetter has unearthed tons of EuroTrash and artsy gems, and his catalog (\$3) is packed with exclusive oddities. Recommended! Check out ETC on-line at: <http://www.diabolik.demon.co.uk>.

JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT, P.O. Box 19, Dept. SC, Butler, NJ 07405. Featuring the best and most obscure grindhouse gems, the Gore Gazette video collection, and loads of oddities! \$3 gets you their mind-blowing catalog

(with checks made out to Mike Decker). Recommended!!

LUMINOUS FILM & VIDEO WURKS, P.O. Box 1047, Dept. SC, Medford, NY 11763. From EuroSex epics and spaghetti westerns, to arthouse fare from the likes of Greenaway and Marco Ferreri, all tapes have full-color packaging. Visit 'em at: <http://www.lfw.com>.

PLANET XYZ, c/o Paul Carter, 251 Twin Oak, Seguin, TX 78155. Always coming up with new updates, their catalog includes a bizarre array of drive-in schlock, Triple-X oldies, and cult faves.

SHOCKING IMAGES, P.O. Box 601972, Dept. SC, Sacramento, CA 95860. Offering up rare videos, laserdiscs, DVD's, t-shirts, and import soundtracks, head to their website at: <http://www.shockingimages.com>.

SHOCKING VIDEOS, c/o Mark Johnston, HC-77 Box 111, Hinton, WV 25951. A jaw-dropping selection of video rarities, from lost drive-in classics to mind-roasting oddities from around the world. Get their catalog now! E-mail: shockingvideos@citynet.net.

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO, P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133. If you're in search of grindhouse-era sexploitation (and beyond), this is the mother load. Always expanding their massive catalog, it's crammed with XXX-sleaze and once-lost schlock-gems. See for yourself at: <http://www.somethingweird.com>.

TAPES OF TERROR, c/o P. Riggs, 11430 Mullins Dr., Dept. SC, Houston, TX 77035-2632. Embracing all of the genres, from horror rarities to the tops in cult cinema. \$2 gets you their catalog, and be sure to visit their website at: <http://www.morticiasmorgue.com/tot.html>.

VIDEO DUNGEON, P.O. Box 873, Dept. SC, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688. Their catalog (\$3) offers up sleazy horror, sexploitation and weirdness from around the globe. Check 'em out at <http://www.videodungeon.net>.

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VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI, P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116-1917. An always-impressive mix of overseas delights, including giallos, Asian dementia and arthouse rarities. Write NOW for their free 70-page catalog, or visit their website at: <http://www.vsom.com>.

VIDEO VORTEX, 429 Danforth Ave. Suite 414, Dept. SC, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4K 1P1. Carrying some of the most bizarre, uncut films from around the globe; five dollars gets you their ultra-thick catalog.

VIDEO WASTELAND, P.O. Box 81551, Cleveland, OH 44181-1551. In addition to their cool mail-order video rental service, VW sells tons of books, mags and soundtracks. \$13 gets you their huge, 160-page catalog, and check 'em out at: <http://www.videowasteland.com>.

WITCHING HOUR VIDEO, P.O. Box 806, University Station, Dept. SC, Lexington, KY 40506-0025. Crammed with video horror, sleaze and Asian bad craziness, \$4 gets you their NEW, hot-off-the-presses catalog. Check 'em out at: <http://www.witchinghourvideo.com>.

icons, beginning with Russ Meyer, Radley Metzger, Alex De Renzy, and Chuck Vincent, as well as later figures like Rinse Dream (CAFE FLESH). There's also an enlightening chapter on EuroPorn filmmakers and the UK's sex-film industry, as well as the inevitable slide of the industry, due to AIDS, scandals (such as underage Traci Lords), and worst of all, videotape. Let's not forget interviews with David Friedman and Jane Hamilton (a/k/a Veronica Hart), as well as hope for the current generation of porn-auteurs. Still, what really makes the book flow is Flint's intelligent, yet always engaging writing. Never afraid to display a personal affinity for his subject matter, he knows this genre inside out (not unlike his trenchcoated readers) while touching upon its darker niches, such as mob connections, bitter personal problems (e.g. Harry Reems' coke-snorting), or hilarious tidbits such as Linda Lovelace's dog-fucking movies. Sprinkled with salacious photos, this is worth a look for longtime fans of the hardcore-genre, and should be mandatory reading for up-and-coming deviants who have little knowledge of these legitimately-watchable X-rated movies and their stars.

HOLLYWOOD HEX



HOLLYWOOD HEX: DEATH AND DESTINY IN THE DREAM FACTORY by Mikita Brottman (Creation Books; \$19.95).

Equipped with a fascinating concept, this unfocused volume investigates "cursed" Hollywood films -- which have directly or indirectly led to one's death -- as well as that always-present link between Stardom and the Grim Reaper. Beginning with a rundown of Hollywood's most infamous suicides, homicides and pathetic demises (while pouring on the juicy gossip), the following chapters get rather dry, as Brottman works overtime to make his 'sinister' connections stick. Sometimes they're valid, but more often seem ludicrously tenuous -- such as tying Roman Polanski's ROSEMARY'S BABY and the following chapters get rather dry, as Brottman works overtime to make his 'sinister' connections stick. Sometimes they're valid, but more often seem ludicrously tenuous -- such as tying Roman Polanski's ROSEMARY'S BABY and

Heather O'Rourke, and how THE BELIEVERS led to a real-life, Santeria-like cult. If this weren't tacky enough, it even trots out Vic Morrow's TWILIGHT ZONE beheading, plus the deaths of Bruce Lee and son Brandon. Often sounding like a written version of an E!-channel portrait, the subject matter isn't anything new, but Brottman admittedly did his research, and it's often more entertaining for throw-away tidbits (such as Jeffrey Dahmer's obsession with EXORCIST III).

JAPAN'S FAVORITE MON-STAR: THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF "THE BIG G" by Steve Ryfle (ECW Press; \$19.95).

If you're a fan of Godzilla movies, don't pass up this hefty, 375-page volume, which is devoted entirely to that radioactive superstar of the *kaiju eiga* genre. Oddly enough, the only thing which keeps this from becoming the definitive Godzilla guide is interference from Toho Studios, who's so anal (and litigious) about their rubbery creation that they won't allow anyone else to run detailed synopses or photos! While it might be difficult to imagine a Godzilla book without any pictures of the Big Green Guy, author Steve Ryfle does his damndest to convince us otherwise. Broken up into meticulously-researched chapters on the making and marketing of each movie, there are also wonderfully detailed profiles of those involved -- from founding fathers such as director Ishiro Honda, FX-expert Eiji Tsuburaya and composer Akira Ifukube, to lesser-known (but equally invaluable) cast and crew members. In addition to interviews with actor Robert Dunham and special effects director Teruyoshi Nakano, this is thick with trivia, as we learn about the changes between Japanese and American versions, publicity gimmicks, the English-language dubbing process, Hanna-Barbera's cartoon series, aborted ideas, and a justifiable drubbing of the limp US adaptation. Complete with a cast and crew appendix, this unauthorized bio is an incredible work, packed with information and obviously fueled by the author's love of his subject matter.



bloothirsty MACBETH to the Manson Clan's murder of girlfriend Sharon Tate. We also learn of accidents during the making of THE EXORCIST (as well as its PR-induced hysteria), the deaths of POLTERGEIST co-stars Dominique Dunne and

MAGS, ZINES & SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Here's the latest batch of 'zines to come my way. Try to give 'em all the support you can, and if you're reluctant to send well-concealed cash, it's best to make checks payable directly to their editor.

ALTERNATIVE CINEMA #16 (P.O. Box 371, Glenwood, NJ 07418; \$20 for 4 issues). Devoted to "independent and underground filmmaking," the latest edition contains articles by and about up-and-coming filmmakers such as Patrick Gleason, Brook Elms and Zack Snygg. There's also plenty of information on the B-movie scene and loads of indie film reviews.

ASIAN CULT CINEMA #23-24 (P.O. Box 16-1919, Miami, FL 33116; \$6 apiece, or 6 issues for \$30). The latest two editions of this essential Asian film digest cover a wide range of fascinating and informative topics. Packed with interviews and reviews, highlights include a pictorial of Japanese super-heroines and an overview of the *Sukeban Deka* (School Girl Crimefighters) series, with articles written by two of its stars.

ASKEW REVIEWS #4 (Denis Sheehan, P.O. Box 684, Hanover, MA 02339; \$2). This straight-forward, well-written 'zine tackles various fronts. On the music scene, there's a Q&A with Tree-frontman River, plus a slew of music reviews. Add a few dozen video reviews and some humorous anecdotes, and you've got a cool, eclectic mag.

BATTLE STATIONS #2 (John Harrison, 2 Glenbrae Court, Berwick, Victoria, Australia 3806). Here's something a little different -- a film-zine devoted entirely to War entertainment. There's a look back at war comics, Nazi-themed sleaze videos, paperback reviews, plus an interview with G.I. Joe action-figure illustrator Sam Petrucci. Fascinating stuff.

CARBON 14 #15 (P.O. Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125; \$18 for 4 issues). The latest edition of this excellent alternative music mag includes interviews with Johnny Legend and artist Isabel Samaras, coverage on lots of indie bands, and tons of music reviews; while Dan Taylor's always-welcome *Exploitation Retrospect* insert features Barry Hickey's firsthand tale of working with the one-and-only Klaus Kinski.

CASHIERS DU CINEMART #9 (Mike White, P.O. Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192-2401; \$10 for 4 issues). One of my favorite 'zines, full of great writing, attitude and humor. This issue features *Star Wars*-related articles (from personal memories to the Turkish rip-off), plus lengthy reviews of everything from *Death Game* and *The Conversation* to John Paizs' forgotten *Crime Wave* (which I reviewed way back in SC#6). Recommended.

THE CHEESEPLANT #2 (Matt Blake, 27 Latymer Court, Hammersmith, London, W6 7JD; £2.50 / \$6). The sophomore edition of this UK 'zine focuses on the screen career of George Hilton -- a mega-star of European exploitation cinema who's barely known in the US. Reviewing his body of work, from Spaghetti westerns, costume dramas and thrillers, along with informative credits, this is definitely a Hilton overdose.

THE DELINEATOR #1 (Patrick Dowers, Art Penn Studios, 515 E. Denny Way #304, Seattle, WA 98122; \$3 cash). A welcome acquisition, this clip-art zine is stuffed with copyright-free artwork from a variety of sources, both old and new. Perfect for people in need of bizarre art, and fun to thumb through when you're stoned.

DREEMY KREEM #3 (P.O. Box 6304, Hoboken, NJ 01030; \$1). I don't receive many non-film-zines in the mail, and when I do, they usually consist of self-indulgent poetry. This digest is an exception, containing cocktail and snack recipes, personal rants, fiction, and a crudely-amusing stream-of-consciousness agenda.

THE EXPLOITATION JOURNAL V.3 No.1 (Keith Crocker, P.O. Box 1742, Baldwin, NY 11510; \$20 for 5-issues). This guide to exploitation and horror covers a wide range of often humorous topics, including projectionists' least-fondest memories, an interview with Mel Welles, and a lovingly lengthy essay on the homo-erotic subtext within *Escape From New York*! Great stuff!

EYE #22 (301 S. Elm Street, Suite 405, Greensboro, NC 27401-2636; \$14 for 6-issues). This well-written, always fascinating magazine is one of my faves. Devoted to fringe culture and media, in addition to loads of cool reviews, this edition features Jack Stevenson's history of the Scopitone, plus interviews with *MST3K*'s Mike Nelson, Julie Strain and public access' Goddess Kringle.

FILM GEEK #1 (Alan Fare, P.O. Box 501113, Tulsa, OK 74150; One 33¢ stamp). This is a thin, tiny Xerox-zine, but whaddaya expect for one lousy postage stamp? Reviewing a handful of cinematic oddities (*Gummo*, *Luther the Geek*, *Sofi*), it may be slight, but it's also passionately written.

HIP POCKET SLEAZE #2 (John Harrison, 2 Glenbrae Court, Berwick, Victoria, Australia 3806). Focusing on the wonderful world of vintage adult paperbacks, this digest is filled with fun information and a true appreciation of the subject matter. In addition to book-cover reproductions, this edition reviews several classics, including the gore novels of H.G. Lewis.

LIQUID CHEESE #9 (Dave Kosanke, 8123 West Margaret Lane, Franklin, WI 53132; \$4 ppd). Focusing on "movies and music to mangle your mind," this entertaining mag is filled with reviews of current films (*eXistenZ*, *8mm*) and sleaze classics, a tribute to EuroTrash queen Edwige Fenech, plus a trip to the October '98 Chiller Theatre convention.

Nth DEGREE (Nu Pantheon Media, P.O. Box 40245, Portland, OR 97240-0245; \$10 for 3-issues). Focusing on fringe culture, this nicely designed-and-printed freshman issue is a bit dry in the writing department, but covers a good array of topics, including *Hellboy*-creator Mike Mignola, a dissection of Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, and yet another analysis of HK action cinema.

PURPLE MONKEY DISHWASHER #5 (P.O. Box 18, Modbury North, S.A. 5092, Australia; \$2). Armed with a decidedly non-P.C. attitude, this features a great interview with porn-legend Ron Jeremy, as well as the editor of a pissing-fetish mag. In addition to reviews of video smut (from *Salo* to the Pam & Tommy Lee fuck-film), there are also music interviews.

REEL WILD CINEMA #6 (John Harrison, 2 Glenbrae Court, Berwick, Victoria, Australia 3806). This "journal of eclectic film & video" is always a fun read, and their latest is mostly devoted to the World of X-rated Cinema -- from reviews of early classics (including several starring Traci Lords), porn queen suicides and even bestiality movies. On a different note, there's also an interview with *I, Zombie* director Andrew Parkinson.

ROASTING RODERICK #3 (Parker Anderson, P.O. Box 1285, Prescott, AZ 86302). This old-school zine (i.e. badly typed, Xeroxed and stapled in the top corner) contains an immense Letters Column and dozens of film reviews, but lacks the obsessive details of his earlier issues (due to an unfortunate illness). Parker, get better!

SLEAZOID EXPRESS (Bill Landis, P.O. Box 620, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10011; \$6). A nostalgic blast for anyone who misses the seedy days of the Deuce, it's packed with lengthy film reviews of everything from *Beyond Love and Evil* to *Let Me Die a Woman*, and is good for a week's worth of bathroom reading! Although some of these subjects (*Ilse* movies, Andy Milligan) have been covered to death over the last decade, there's no beating Landis' knowledgeable and amusing style.

STREETCLEANER #7 (1515 N. Town East Blvd, Suite 138-146, Mesquite, TX 75150; \$1 or 3 stamps). This 14-page zine's agenda is simple: Video reviews of every imaginable genre. The latest issue covers everything from D'Amato's *The Grim Reaper* to Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. You might disagree with some of his opinions (*Alexander Nevsky* gets a 'D'? *The Bicycle Thief* a 'C-'), but at least that proves he's no arthouse snob.

SUSPIRIA (Dave Wood, P.O. Box 29206, London, SE8 4WW, England; In the US, £6.95). This one-shot booklet is devoted to Argento's *Suspria*, and if you're a fan, it's well worth a look. A slick 44-page digest, laced with images from the film, ads, slicks and lengthy analysis, it even includes an interview with a BBFC censor.

TAIL SPINS #32 (P.O. Box 1860, Evanston, IL 60204; \$4 each / \$15 for 6-issues). You never know what'll turn up in this outrageous mag. The latest includes an extensive investigation into the life and death of musician Bobby Fuller, a grim look at Trepanation (self-induced skull-drilling), plus dozens of pages of music reviews.

TRASH CONFIDENTIAL #2-3 (Andrew Leavold, 709 Ann St., Fortitude Valley, Qld 4006 Australia). This DownUnder zine covers lots of odd topics, from a profile of John Holmes to a Q&A with Paul Verhoeven. Primarily, it offers reviews, from current releases on that side of the globe to cult slop like *Fat Guy Goes Nutzoid*.

TRASH TIMES #6 (Rich Behrens, P.O. Box 248, Glenview, IL 60025; \$2 ppd). The latest issue of this cool li'l movies-and-music 'zine includes an interview with The Waistcoats, remembering Son of Svengoolie, plus several dozen movie reviews, which cover both new releases and older faves (*Truck Turner*, *Beat Girl*).

ULTRA VIOLENT #1 (Scott Gabbey, P.O. Box 110117, Palm Bay, FL 32911-0117; \$3). The premiere issue of this 32-page mag is a credible debut, focusing on the more acidic areas of exploitation cinema. Along with film reviews and a section devoted to Fulci, there are interviews with Nacho Cerda and Jim Van Bebber.

UNCUT #8 (Midnight Media, P.O. Box 211, Huntingdon, PE18 8WD, England; £6.95). Crammed with "worldwide video weirdness," this beautifully-printed 60-page magazine reviews all of the flicks that never make it to the UK in one piece -- from *The Devil Within Her* to *Bloody Birthday*. Informative, well-written and packed with illos; there's also a terrific interview with John Saxon. Highly recommended! Their website is at: <http://www.midnight-media.demon.co.uk>.

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